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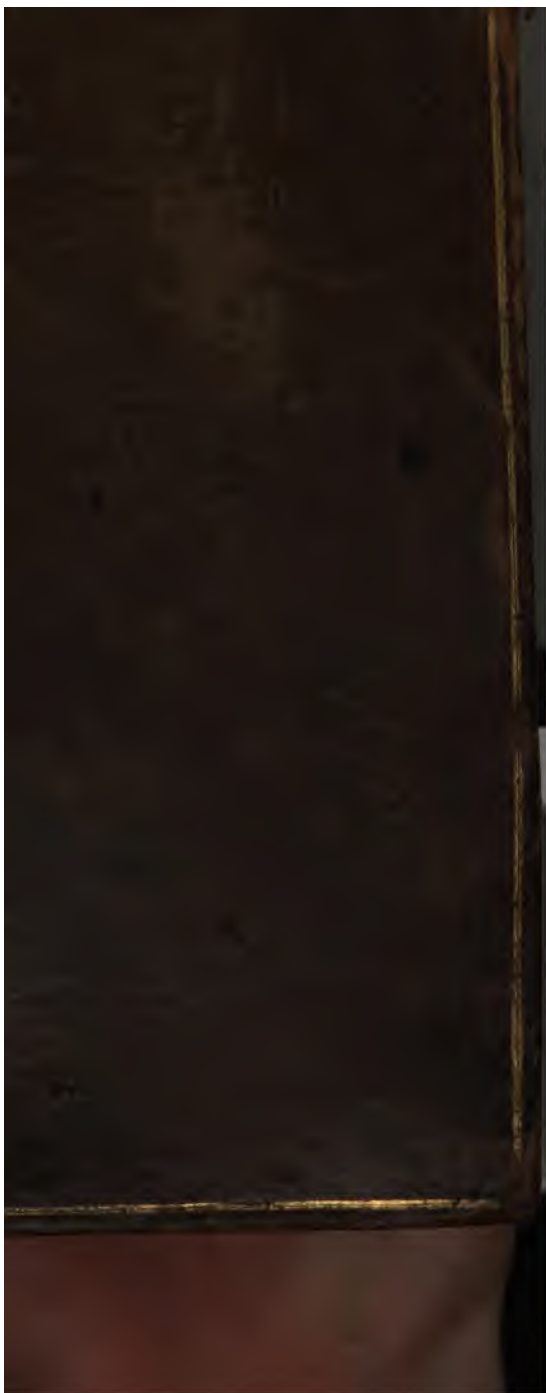
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M O R A L
ENTERTAINMENTS

On the most Important

PRACTICAL TRUTHS
OF THE
Christian Religion.

In THREE VOLUMES.

By ROBERT MANNING.

V O L. I.

L O N D O N:

Printed for **THO. MEIGHAN**, in *Drury-Lane*,
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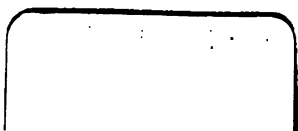
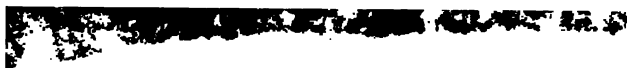


TO THE
RIGHT HONOURABLE
THE
LORD PETRE,
BARON of *WRITTLE*.

MY LORD,



THE following moral
Tracts owe their
Birth principally to
the generous Boun-
ty of the noble Family which
is completely happy in having
your Lordship for its Head.
'Tis therefore an Act of Grati-
tude,





DEDICATION.

Lordship's Patience, I will only add, that nothing but the deep Sense of Gratitude, which I have for the innumerable Favours I have received from your most honour'd Family (to which I am indebted for all I possess in this World) could have prevail'd upon me to give this publick Testimony of it. May your Lordship live many Years, to be the Honour as well as Support of your Family; the Father of the Poor; a Refuge to the Distress'd; and, in a Word, a faithful Imitator of the illustrious Patterns of Virtue you have daily before your Eyes; which are the most hearty Wishes of,

MY LORD,

Your LORDSHIP's most obedient

and humble Servant,

R. MANNING.



THE
P R E F A C E
TO THE
R E A D E R.



THE following Entertainments having hitherto served only for the Use of a private Assembly, the Reader must not be surprised to find me sometimes addressing myself, as is usual in Sermons, to the Congregation before me. However, I did not think it proper to call them by that Name ; because the Method commonly used in Sermons is very different from what I have made Choice of in these Discourses. But it is not at all material by what Name they are call'd, so they do but answer the principal End they are design'd for, which is, to move Sinners to a serious Repentance and Amendment of Life, and give them the best
A 4 Advice

P R E F A C E.

*Advice I gave in order to it. 'Twas this I had principally in View in my Choice of the important Truths I have handled in relation to Death, Judgment, Hell, and Heaven ; the Enormity, and fatal Consequences of Sin, &c. which are the Subjects treated in the thirty-one Entertainments of the first Part. * But what will appear peculiar in this Part is, that the Discourses it contains are linked together with almost the same Connection, as the several Chapters of a Book relating to one Subject.*

The second Part is made up of miscellaneous and unconnected Subjects; some of which I was led to by the Gospels of the Sundays, on which I had Occasion to speak; others were my voluntary Choice, because I thought them useful to the Generality of Christians. But I have always taken care not to force my Text to come over to my Subject, but to make my Subject follow my Text ; so that whoever reads but the Text will immediately know

* The Author at first designed but two Parts, but the Publisher found it more commodious to divide the whole Work into three Volumes.

P R E F A C E.

what Entertainment is prepared for him. And 'tis for this Reason I have not confined myself to any particular Gospel, nor even always to the New Testament, but allow'd myself full Liberty to take my Text from any Part of the Word of God: that so I might be wholly unconstrain'd in the Choice of my Subject; wherein I always had a principal Regard to the Benefit of those I was to instruct.

I will not here trouble the Reader with any Apology for the Meanness of my Performance. For let that be as it will, I have done my best to do him good: And if in reading the following Entertainments he will but take the Interest of his Salvation as seriously to Heart, as I have labour'd to instruct him in the Method of attaining to it. I hope I shall not be wholly frustrated of the End I have propos'd to myself; which is, to be assisting to him in the Management of that important Concern.

However, I will not presume to flatter myself, that the Entertainments I have prepared will please all Sorts of Palates; being sensible that those, who are

P R E F A C E.

already considerably advanced in the Way of Perfection, would be much more agreeably entertain'd with Lectures of a more sublime and spiritual Taste. For I cannot deny but the greatest Part of the Subjects I have chosen are to the Persons now mention'd much like the first Rudiments of Learning to a consummate Scholar; And tho' the very Alphabet of Christianity, and the most vulgar Truths of the Christian Doctrine may be render'd profitable, even to the most perfect; 'tis certain, however, that all Truths are not equally useful to all States. St. Paul spoke Wisdom amongst the Perfect; sapientiam autem loquimur inter perfectos: But to the Imperfect he wrote thus, I have fed you with Milk, and not with Meat, for hitherto ye were not able to bear it; neither yet are ye able. So that the Circumstances of Persons are no less to be consider'd in the Choice of Advice, or Truths to be deliver'd to them, than their Constitutions in the Choice of Meats.

Now I have neither writ for Priests nor Religious, but for Laicks only; that
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P R E F A C E.

is, for Persons engaged in the Commerce of the World, and exposed to all the Dangers and Corruptions of it: And these I have endeavour'd to feed with Milk, and not with Meat; for they are not able to bear it; that is, I have made it my principal Business to instruct them in all the most essential and indispensable Duties of a Christian Life: I have laid such Considerations before them, as are most proper to wean their Hearts from all sinful and inordinate Affections to the Things of this World; to inspire them with a Hatred to Sin, a Love of Virtue, and a serious Concern for the Salvation of their Souls: Finally, I have recommended to them a regular Uniformity in the Practice of such Exercises and Devotions, as are both suited to their Circumstances, and will help to nourish and strengthen the foremention'd Christian Dispositions in their Souls.

All this, I hope, they will find perform'd in the three Volumes of these Entertainments. Wherein if they meet sometimes with Repetitions of the same Truths or Maxims, I must assure them

P R E F A C E.

it was wholly unavoidable. First, because since several Duties flow from one and the same Principle, it was impossible to explain these several Duties without repeating the Principle upon which they are grounded. 2dly, Because general Remedies must of Necessity be repeated as often as any particular Distemper, for which they are prescribed, is spoken of. And, 3dly, As the same unhappy State of Sinners, the Dangers that attend it, and the Methods of their Cure are represented under diverse Parables or Figures, in moralizing upon some of these I was unavoidably lead to a Repetition of the same Reflections, Remonstrances, and Advice; without which, the Subject I had undertaken, could not be fully handled, and my Discourse upon it would have been manifestly defective.

But tho' these Reasons had not obliged me to a frequent Repetition of some Truths; yet I believe some Readers at least will find their Account in it: For all Persons are not quite so happy in their Memories, nor so easy in receiving last-
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ing Impressions, but that they may stand in need of being told the same Thing oftner than once. Besides, as the same Meat does not always go down with an equal Relish, so it is with spiritual Truths, which are the Food of our Souls: What we may not relish, or be touch'd with at one Time, may have better Success, and affect us very sensibly at another. St. Augustine was in a Moment determin'd to an entire Change of Life by reading a few Lines in St. Paul; yet it is probable he had read them many times before: But till that happy Moment, they had been as so much Seed thrown upon a barren Soil. And we observe the same Diversity of Success in physical Prescriptions: For the same Physick administer'd to the same Patient has a good Effect sometimes, and often none at all. And therefore as a Patient cannot reasonably be angry at his Physician for repeating the same Dose as often as he thinks it for his Good, so the Reader cannot justly quarrel with me for giving him the same Advice often over, unless he can convince me that every one, who shall read these
Enter-

P R E F A C E.

Entertainments, will be so docile as not to stand in need of being told the same Thing oftner than once, which I can rather wish, than hope for; since we find by Experience that the Distempers of the Soul are usually even more obstinate than those of the Body.

I hope I shall not need to fear being accused of too much Rigour. For tho' I have been under a Necessity of handling many severe Truths, I am not conscious to myself of having overstrain'd any.

But be that as it will, I sincerely submit both this and whatever I have writ, to the Judgment and Correction of my Superiours. And being sensible how easily some unguarded Expressions may have slip'd from my Pen in so great a Number and Variety of Discourses, it is my hearty Request, that whether I be alive or dead, they may not be printed without being first strictly examined by some Person of known Judgment and Learning.

C O N-



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T H E

First ENTERTAINMENT.

The Certainty of D E A T H.

In all thy Works remember thy last End,
Eccl. vii. 40.



A N'S greatest Weakness consists in receiving too easily Impressions from sensible Objects. The Cares and Solitudes of Life fill his Heart, and it's Pleasures corrupt it by drawing it from God and the Concerns of a future State: So that when any agreeable Object presents itself, we naturally move towards it with Affection, and entertain it with Pleasure. It possesses the Imagination, it seizes the Heart; and when the Place is thus taken

Tom. I. B up

up to our Satisfaction, all serious Thoughts are so much Wormwood, presented to Persons that are gratifying themselves with the most delicious Wines: And we are so far from inviting them to us, that we usually reject them, as envious Intruders that come to disturb or imbitter all our Pleasures.

This Easiness in our Nature of receiving violent Impressions from sensible Objects, may be looked upon as the Root of all our Passions, and by Consequence of all the Disorders of human Life; and the best Remedy against this Weakness is the frequent Consideration of such Truths, as are most proper either to prevent the Violence of those Impressions, or give an early Check to them, when they happen to surprise us. The Remedy is distasteful indeed, but absolutely necessary, like bitter Draughts to recover a decayed or depraved Appetite.

Now of all the Truths of Christian Religion, none are more proper to produce these happy Effects, than those which regard our *last End*, especially, if by repeated serious Reflections we imprint them so deeply in our Hearts, as to render them familiar to us. *In all thy Works remember thy last End.* Oh! how little would this World appear, if like the Royal Prophet
we

we always kept Eternity in View ! How weak would all its Charms become, if we considered, and were convinced in our Hearts, that they are the Seeds of everlasting Misery and Torments ! Would Men so easily venture upon the Violation of God's holy Law, if they remembered that there is a Day to come, in which that Law will judge them, and if found guilty, doom them to eternal Flames ! Or would they have the Boldness to live on for Months and Years together in the State of mortal Sin, if they reflected seriously that Death may surprise them in that State ; and that if it should surprise them, they are lost without Remedy ! No, certainly. All criminal Pleasures, presented to a Heart penetrated with these Truths, would lose their Relish. Innocence would find them an effectual Preservative against Sin ; and the most corrupt Temper would grow uneasy under the Stings and Terrors they would leave behind them.

For which Reason, as the *Holy Ghost* has recommended to us the Thoughts of Death and Eternity, as a universal Remedy against Sin ; so the *evil Spirit*, who opposes our Salvation with the utmost Malice, knowing by Experience the Power and Efficacy of this Remedy, not only in those whom it has preserved from fall-

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ing,

4 *Moral Entertainments.*

ing, but many more, whom it has effectually delivered from the Tyranny of their Passions, and rescued from eternal Death; the Devil, I say, who has found this by Experience, does all he can to keep those wholesome Thoughts at the greatest Distance from us; but especially from those, whom he has already in his Power: And therefore if the sudden Death of any Person, or some exemplary Judgment happens to alarm them, as it does sometimes, the Devil fails not to procure them immediately some Diversion, or Amusement, to put it out of their Heads. It frightens them a little at first, wears off by degrees, and so they think no more of it.

In like manner if the casual Hearing of some pious Discourse should begin to touch them, the Devil has Opportunities and Objects ready at hand to work upon their prevailing Passions, and by means of them to prevent the Continuance of any other Impression. Nay, if former Objects, that have served to entertain them with criminal Pleasures for some Time, begin to lose their Charm, and grow stale upon their Hands, the Devil is officious enough to furnish them with fresh ones, lest their Passions coming to cool, or abate with Disuse, should give Opportunity for serious Thoughts to work them into
a better

Moral Entertainments. §

a better Disposition. And thus he leads them on thoughtless from Sin to Sin, till either a sudden Death, occasioned perhaps by the Excess of criminal Disorders, hurries them to the Tribunal of God; or, if they have some Time of Sickness allowed them, they are either strongly tempted to die impenitent, or at the best have nothing but the Uncertainty and Deceitfulness of a Death-bed Repentance to depend upon for their eternal Salvation. And 'tis one of these the Devil always aims at in diverting Sinners from the wholesome Thoughts of Death; to the End that, by never thinking of it till it come, *rushing upon them like a Storm* (as the Word of God expresses it) they may always live unprepared for it.

In order therefore to prevent this irreparable Misfortune, I shall now begin with some Considerations upon the *Certainty of Death*; which shall be the whole Subject of this Entertainment.

The fifth Chapter of *Genesis* furnishes us with a most excellent Meditation upon Death. It contains a List of those ancient Patriarchs who first propagated Mankind, and each Verse is closed with this doleful Sentence, *et mortuus est*, and he died. *Adam* lived 930 Years, *et mortuus est*, and he died. *Ends* lived 905 Years,

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et mortuus est, and he died. *Mathusala* lived 969 Years, *et mortuus est*, and he died. In effect, these few Words, *vixit et mortuus est*, he lived and died, are a compendious History of Mankind: Since of all those Millions of Men, Women, and Children, from the first that entered upon the Theatre of this World, to him who went off last, the most assured Account that can be given of them is, that they all *lived* and *died*. Some indeed have been allowed to act a longer Part than others; but all made their *Exit* at last, and were forced to submit to the Stroke of Death.

Enoch also and *Elijah*, who are reserved by God to be his Champions against the wicked *Antichrist*, must undergo at last the common Punishment of Sin. The Payment of the Debt is not remitted but delayed; and Death will claim its Right before they can be cloathed with Immortality. Nay, the blessed *Mother of God*, tho' privileged in an extraordinary Manner, yet was not exempt from paying the common Debt of the Children of *Adam*. And *Christ* himself, having taken our Sins upon him, would not enter into Glory, but by becoming first *obedient unto Death*, even the *Death of the Cross*.

Thus

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Thus Almighty God seems to have taken care that the Belief we have of the Certainty of Death shall not be weakened by any of those Artifices, Men ordinarily make use of to disguise many other Truths that suit not with their Inclinations. For though no Truth be more disrelishing to Nature than that we must once die, yet none was ever less doubted of. The unquestionable Experience of so many Ages already past, forms in every Man's Judgment so full a Conviction of it, that even those who had the Vanity to think themselves so far exalted above the rest of human Kind, as to challenge divine Honours, were never so mad as to flatter themselves into an Opinion of their being exempt from the general Law of Death.

The Devil himself, since the first sad Proof of Mortality in the Death of *Abel*, never had the Impudence to impose upon any Man that he should not die. It was indeed the Cheat he once put upon our first Parents before Experience could give him the Lye. But this Imposture has since been too gross to succeed a second time. He therefore says not to us, *ye shall not die*, but he only endeavours to make us believe we shall not die so soon as perhaps we may be apt to fear. He tells us we have Youth or Health on our
B 4 side,

8 *Moral Entertainments.*

Ide, the Prospect of many Years before us, and a strong Constitution, to secure us against an untimely End: Aiming by these Artifices to keep the Thoughts of Death at the greatest Distance from us, since he cannot destroy our Belief of it.

For this Reason many have endeavoured to countermine the Devil's Craft and Malice, by keeping a Death's-Head in their Bed-chambers or Closets, to serve them as a Looking-glass to see themselves in, and be daily put in mind of what they must once come to. So the pious *Maximilian* had always a Coffin standing at his Bed-side, that he might begin and end each Day with the wholesome Thought of Death: and another Prince for the same Purpose ordered one of his Pages to greet him daily with this Morning Salutation, *Remember that thou art a mortal Man.*

However, we need not have recourse to such extraordinary Expedients to put us in mind of our Mortality. The very Air we breathe, the Meat we daily eat, and the Cloaths we wear, to hinder Death from seizing us before the Time ordain'd by Providence, may do this Office for us. Nay, the very Earth whereon we tread, under which there lie already crumbled into Dust so many of our Acquaintance and Relations, who were once as gay and merry

merry, and as strong and healthful as the youngest of this Company, may as we walk, and often loiter away our precious Hours, put us in mind what costly Matter these Bodies, we so idolize, were originally composed of, and what they must again return into. We need no other Monitor to make us remember that their Beginning was and End will be no other than Dust and Clay.

Who is the Man alive, (says David) that will not see Death? For the Certainty of Death is the same as that of Life. Because Life, if rightly considered, is but the Way or Passage to Death; into which (says *Seneca*) whoever is once entered, must continue without stopping till he falls into the Hands of Death. *Remember (says Solomon) that Death stops not* : and the Reason is because Life stops not. So that Life is nothing but a continual dying; that is, a continual moving towards its End, which is Death. For which Reason the Word of God compares Man's Life to a *Race*. Which Similitude expresses both the Swiftnefs and uninterrupted Continuance of its Course. And we may truly say we are already dead to all the Years we have already lived; since what is past can now no more be reckon'd a Part of our Lives,

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than

than the Blood let out of our Veins, or what Age has already consumed of our Bodies, can be called a Part of our present Being.

Since therefore all must die ; since Death is an irresistible Debt, which all must pay to Nature ; since we are already dying, and in the Hands of Death, we ought in Time to contract a Familiarity with it, that we may not be surpris'd, when it comes to seize us once for all.

St. *Austin* upon these Words of the Psalmist, *Let them descend alive into Hell*, gives this most excellent Advice ; *Let us descend alive, that we may not descend into Hell when we are dead.* Now it will be no less profitable to go down sometimes by Thought and Meditation into the Grave of some deceased Friend ; where if our Curiosity invites us to inquire what State his Soul is now in, let us reflect upon his Life past ; and we may in some Degree, though not with an infallible Certainty, inform ourselves. Because a good Life is generally rewarded with a happy Death, and a good Death seldom follows a bad Life.

If he lived (as St. *Paul* exhorts us) *temperately, justly, and godly, looking for the blessed Hope, and the glorious Appearing*
of

of the great God, and our Saviour Jesus Christ, we may confidently pronounce the Soul of that Man happy. But if, on the contrary, he followed Ungodliness and worldly Lusts, if he lived in the Practice of wilful Sin, and continued in it to his last Sickness; 'tis true indeed, we cannot pass a peremptory Sentence upon him, because the Depth of God's Mercies is as unsearchable as his Judgments; yet we may without any Danger of rash Judgment pronounce his Salvation to be very doubtful, and even questionable, beyond the ordinary Degree of Uncertainty which attends the Generality of Men, whatever Appearances there may be for or against him.

Let us consider next, that as he was once what we are now, strong and healthful, big with Projects for the Time to come, and as little suspecting the Stroke of Death as the rest of his surviving Friends, so must we once be what he now is (and God Almighty knows how soon) wrapt up in a Shroud, shut up within a narrow Coffin, laid under Ground, trampled upon by future Generations, and in a Word, as little either thought or spoken of as he now is. Our dearest Friends will then pass by us, or walk over us with the same Indifference and Unconcern, as if

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we were a Thing of past Ages, and had never had the least Share in their Thoughts. And here is an End of all that Esteem and Love we often court with so much Passion, and purchase perhaps by pawning Soul and Conscience for it. This is the Reward we must expect from this so much adored and courted World. Oh! how truly happy are they, whose Hearts are fixed on God alone; who are enamour'd of no Beauty, and seek no Love, but his. For this is a solid and lasting Good, which alone can comfort us at the Hour of Death, accompany us even beyond the Grave, where all Things else forsake us, and when these Bodies are turned into Dust, render our Souls eternally happy.

But let us still pass on to a third Consideration, and imagining ourselves to be in the Grave with some deceased Friend, let us entertain ourselves with him for some few Moments, and ask him some Account of the other World. Let us inquire what his Thoughts now are of his Life past. Oh! let his Condition be what it will, we may be sure, that if he were allow'd to speak, his Answer would be, that were he to live his past Years over again, he would employ them otherwise than he did formerly, or we now do. All worldly Pleasures, sinful Excesses, unprofitable Amuse-

amusements to trifle away Time, Pursuit of Honours, Heaping up Riches, Studying Revenge, and the like, would be the farthest from his Thoughts.

For, if his Soul be happily united to God, the blessed Sight of that incomprehensible Majesty, that infinite Goodness, and infinitely charming Beauty, has now given him a quite different Idea from what he formerly had, or Men can have in this Life of the monstrous Blackness and Deformity of Sin. He would tell us, that were his Soul to return again to his Body, it were impossible he should ever have the Heart to offend God with deliberate Reflection.

But if his Soul, unworthy yet to be admitted to the blessed Fruition, be for some time condemned to purging Flames, till she be purified from all Dross and Alloy of earthly Defilements, and has paid the last Farthing of the Debt contracted by his past Follies; Oh! could he utter his Thoughts, he would give you a most lamentable Account of his Sufferings. He would tell you his Soul is tortured with unspeakable Anguish for his past Sins; that his Grief for being kept back from the Enjoyment of Almighty God is beyond Expression or Imagination; finally, that all the Torments of this World are

not

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not to be compared with the least of those his Soul endures.

But what a frightful Account would he give of his Condition, if his unhappy Soul be doom'd to everlasting Flames! With what piercing tho' fruitless Sorrow would he bewail his past Pleasures! How many heavy Curses would he heap upon this treacherous World, or rather his own treacherous Passions, which to gratify themselves have betrayed him to eternal Misery and Torments! He would doubtless tell us with the deepest Anguish of a despairing Soul, that were he Master of ten thousand Worlds, he would joyfully sacrifice them all for one Hour of that Time, of which we are as lavish as if it were of no Value: He would embrace with Joy, though it were for Millions of Years, the most rigid Penance that ever was undergone, so he were but once more under a Possibility of saving his Soul.

This is undoubtedly the Account he would give us of the other World, if he were permitted to utter his Thoughts, and is without all Dispute a faithful Representation of the Ideas the Souls departed have of the eternal State, in which they are now fixed, and towards which we are hastening as fast as the Wings of Time, and the short

short Course of an uncertain perishable Life can carry us.

And what remains then but that we now begin, whilst we have yet Time, what we shall otherwise hereafter wish to have done with a fruitless Repentance of our having neglected to do it, whilst we had it in our Power. Remember, *Christians*, and reflect seriously upon it that you must once die. 'Tis as certain, and as much above all Dispute, as that you are now alive. God Almighty has decreed it from Eternity, and his Decrees are as unchangeable as himself. Dying therefore is a Part you must once act: But it depends upon your own Free-will, to make Death a Passage to a happy or unhappy Eternity. If you live well, God's Grace will not abandon you in your last Conflict, but strengthen you to *die the Death of the Just*, which is *precious in his Sight*. But if you live ill, you run a dreadful Hazard of being justly permitted by Almighty God to die as you lived.

It therefore highly concerns us all to make our whole Life a continual Preparation for Death. This is the only End for which it was bestowed upon us, and for which it has been till now, and is still continued to us by the Divine Bounty. If hitherto we have not answered these

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Purposes, 'tis now high Time to think seriously of it. And how happy are we that it is still Time! What a Mercy is it that we have not been cut off, whilst we were guilty of mortal Sin, which has been our Case so often! Where should we now be, if this had happened to us, as it has to Millions before us? Can we think of it without Trembling? Can we think of it without a Sense of Gratitude to the infinite Goodness that has preserved us, and a Hatred to those Sins which would have rendered us eternally unhappy! These are doubtless the Fruits which God's Forbearance expects of us. This is the Use we ought henceforward to make of it. And then Death will cease to be an Evil to us. For though Death join'd with Sin be the greatest of Evils, it is a real Good without it, as being a secure Passage to a happy Eternity.

The

The Second ENTERTAINMENT.

Concerning some general Preparations for D E A T H.

— *Blessed are those Servants, whom the Lord,
when he cometh, shall find watching,*
Luke xii. 37.

IN my last Discourse I furnished you with some Considerations upon the Certainty of Death. But this Truth, tho' never so evident and weighty, can be no farther useful to us, than as it has an Influence upon the Conduct of our Lives. For what will it avail us to have a speculative Persuasion that we must once die, unless we conclude practically from it, that it is therefore our Duty as well as Interest to be always prepared for it.

This then is the immediate Consequence to be drawn from it, *viz.* that since we are created to be happy, and our Happiness depends upon Dying well, it follows, that the principal Business of Life ought to be a Preparation for Death. This is that *one, and only necessary thing*, which admits of no Dispensation, and every Thing in the World ought to yield and
be

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be sacrificed to it. Ease, Interest, Honour and Pleasure are to be consulted no otherwise, than as they have a Reference to the general End of living and dying well. The Subject then of this Entertainment shall be the general previous Dispositions required for the happy Performance of this great Work, that is, some general Directions relating to the Manner, how we ought to dispose ourselves beforehand for Death.

The Prophet *Isaias* being sent by God to King *Ezekias*, to forewarn him of his approaching End, delivered his Message in these Words: *Put thy House in Order, for thou shalt die, and thou shalt not live.* This Advice of the Prophet, *put thy House in Order*, if literally taken, regards particularly those, who have their Wills to make, or any temporal Concerns to settle before they die; and calls very pressingly upon them to prepare themselves for their last End by an early Discharge of this Duty. For we may truly say they are but very ill Managers either of their Spiritual or Temporal Concerns, who either out of Sloth, or a kind of indolent Temper, or upon any other frivolous Motive, put off their making their Wills to the last Extremity; it being a Business, that requires a greater Presence of Mind than can be expected from

from a Person labouring under the Anguish of a mortal Distemper. Besides, how easily may a dying Man be imposed upon by interested Persons about him, at a Time when for a little Ease he is ready to consent to any thing that is suggested to him ! and so it may in Effect become their Will instead of his : To say nothing of the Unseasonableness of such a Concern, at a Time when his Thoughts ought to look quite another Way, and be wholly turned towards the other World, where he is then going to make his eternal Abode.

But the ill Consequences of these Delays will yet appear more clearly, if we consider the Hazard they expose a dying Person to, of dying without making any Will at all. For this is the unavoidable Consequence, if he either happens to die suddenly, or to be out of his Senses in his last Sickness. And how fatal has this often proved to Families, by engaging them in endless Quarrels and Law-suits ! Nay, how prejudicial must it needs be to those who have a just Title to have some Provision made for them, tho' perhaps not grounded upon any Law that can compell the next Heir to it, and are by this Means deprived of a necessary Subsistence, whilst all is swept away by some one, who either deserves or wants it least, and will have

no

no Regard either to Proximity of Blood, or the Intention of the Party deceased, or the Merits of those whose past Services entitle them to a Gratification as much as any human Laws.

But as the making of *Wills*, so the Payment of *Debts*, is a Duty not to be deferred to our last Sickness. Many have their Hearts so set upon their Money, that they cannot resolve to part with it till such time as they can keep it no longer. These therefore ought to consider, that a Person in Debt is but another Man's Cash-keeper; and that the Sum he owes is but Money deposited in his Hands, which he cannot detain with Justice any longer than he has the express or tacit Consent of the Party who has a Right to it. So that when the Creditor demands it with Justice and Reason, the Debtor, if able, is under an Obligation of Conscience to pay it. Nay, he is bound to make himself able, as soon as he can, by retrenching all superfluous and unnecessary Expences. After which, all affected Delays are no better than so many repeated Acts of Injustice, which he cannot answer to God nor Man. Nor will his resolving to discharge all Debts, when he is called upon to pay the common Debt of Nature, be any Plea in Favour of this Practice; because we are bound

bound not only to die but live like honest Men. And 'tis much to be suspected, that he who has not the Heart to part with his Money, but when he can keep it no longer, dies with a good Will to have kept it longer, if he could ; which, considering that in the Case before us, it implies Injustice as well as Avarice, is but a very ill Disposition to accompany him to the other World.

I will therefore conclude this Head with repeating to you the Prophet's Advice ; *put thy House in Order.* Expect not the Approach of Death to settle the Concerns of this Life. Do Justice to your Neighbour whilst it is a free and voluntary Act ; and it will be a Comfort in your last Distress both to Mind and Body, to have no other Business then upon your Hands, than the performing well the last Scene of Life.

However, besides this preparatory Disposition consisting in the Regulation of the most important temporal Concern, there is another *House* each Christian has to *put in Order*, to dispose himself for Death, *viz.* his own Soul. And this is the great Business of Life, and undoubtedly challenges his principal Care.

Consider therefore, Christian, what Condition thy House is in, Examine every
Part

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Part of it with 'a diligent and impartial Eye. Is thy *Faith* built upon that *Rock* which *Christ* speaks of? Is it Proof against all Storms of Temptations and Persecutions? Is there a Foundation of *Humility* laid deep enough to bear the Superstructure of all other Virtues? Are the *Doors* and *Windows* of thy House, I mean thy Senses, strongly guarded against the Assaults of Vanity, and fleshly Lusts? Does nothing appear on the Outside, that may scandalize or offend thy Neighbour?

But above all, let us consider how this House of ours is fitted within? Is it furnished suitably to the infinite Dignity of the Divine Guest who is to lodge in it? Does the *Holy Ghost* make his constant Abode there, or do we not often entertain his mortal Enemy? Is it not frequently haunted with evil Spirits, and God Almighty banished from it? We may easily judge what State it is in, if we but reflect who governs, what Order is kept, what Regulations and Methods are observed. Is there as good OEconomy in our Spiritual as Temporal Concerns? Is there as much Care taken to preserve the Life, Health, and Beauty of the Soul, as of the Body? Is there a Time set apart for Prayer, Spiritual Reading, Examination
tion

tion of Conscience, and other Devotions, as well as for Eating, Sleeping, Diversions, and worldly Employments? In a Word, is *Charity* or *Self-love* Mistress within? Does *Reason* or *Passion*, *Justice* or *Humour* bear the greatest Sway? If *Self-love*, *Passion*, and *Humour* govern; alas, it cannot be doubted, but the whole House is in Disorder and Confusion. And how unhappy is the Soul, which Death finds in this State!

But if *Charity* be Mistress, if *Justice*, *Reason*, and *Religion* are consulted in all Concerns both Spiritual and Temporal, there is sufficient Ground to judge our House is in good Order, and we need not fear to be surprised by Death. For where *Charity* is Mistress of the Heart, where *Piety* and the *Fear of God* take Place of *Passion* and *Inclination*, there the *Holy Ghost* resides undoubtedly in the Soul; and where this Divine Guest makes his Abode, all must be orderly and well-disposed. Such a Soul is always prepared for her last Summons. Death will indeed destroy her House of Clay, but 'tis in order to translate her to those heavenly Mansions, where all the Virtues, which adorned her here below, and fitted her for the State of Bliss, will be either rewarded, or receive their final Accomplishment and Perfection.

Whence

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Whence it appears, that the Preparation we are to make for Death, is no other, than that which is to fit us for Heaven. Now nothing can fit us for Heaven, but what will be either rewarded or perfected in Heaven. *Faith* and *Hope*, *Patience* in Adversity, *Love of Enemies*, *pardoning Injuries*, and the like, are Virtues which, to speak properly, will not be perfected, but rewarded in Heaven. For, as Divines teach, there is neither *Faith* nor *Hope* in Heaven. Because by *Faith* we only know God obscurely as through a Mist or Cloud, whereas in Heaven we shall see him *Face to Face*. *Hope* also, tho' never so firm, is always mixed with some *Fear*, and regards a Good not yet possessed: whereas Fruition, which is the Reward of the Life to come, is an actual Possession of God, attended with such an infallible Security, as excludes all Fear or Doubt. *Patience*, and *Love of Enemies*, can likewise have no Place in Heaven; because in Heaven there are no *Enmities* nor *Crosses* to be suffered. However, these Virtues are necessary to dispose us for Heaven, because its Joys are the Reward of them; and those can have no Title to the Reward, who comply not with the Conditions upon which it is promised.

But

But there are other Virtues ; as *Piety*, *Humility*, *Purity*, *Conformity to the Will of God*, and *Charity* (the Queen or rather the Life and Soul of all Virtues) which will not only be rewarded, but perfected in Heaven. So that whoever is void of these Virtues at the Hour of Death, wants the Dispositions that are requisite to qualify him for the State of Bliss. The Reason is evident, because the spiritual Life of the Just in this World differs nothing in Substance from the eternal Life of the Saints in Heaven, since both the one and the other consist chiefly in the *Knowledge* and *Love of God*. But as the Blessed in Heaven have a clearer and perfecter Knowledge of him, so is their Love, and other Virtues following from it, proportionably greater ; and therefore differ indeed from those they possessed on Earth in their Eminency and Perfection, but not in their Nature or Substance.

Whence it follows, that when a Soul adorn'd with these Virtues leaves her earthly Mansion, nothing more is requisite to render her eternally happy, but only to perfect those very Gifts she brings with her, and give, as it were, the finishing Stroke to the Work of Grace, so happily begun, and carried on with Perseverance in this Life. But if none of those Gifts

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or Graces, which *Glory* is to perfect, be found in her at her Entrance into the other World, what other Fate can she expect, than to be for ever excluded from that blessed State? For how can they pretend to the Glory of the Saints, who neglecting in this Life to lay the Foundation of it, remain void of those necessary previous Dispositions, by which the Saints took care to fit themselves for it? Or how can they lay claim to the Reward of Virtue, who bring not with them the Virtues to entitle them to it? 'Tis certainly a great Delusion to think to pass from a Life defiled with Sin, to a State wholly inconsistent with it. The Saints and Angels, who are without Spot or Stain, will not admit into their blessed Society but such as like themselves are pure and holy. Neither will Almighty God own them for Coheirs to the Crown and Kingdom of his Son, who have wilfully renounced, and not recovered the Grace, that made them his *adopted Children*. 'Tis to these unfortunate Souls *St. Austin* addresses himself in the following Words; *Brethren, we must know, that neither Pride, nor Avarice, nor Luxury, ascends with Christ: No Vice of ours ascends with our heavenly Physician.* For since the principal End of his coming into this World was to cure the Distempers

stempers of our Souls, and render us thereby capable of eternal Life, it follows, that they who not only neglect to make use of the Remedies his Goodness has provided for them, but seek rather to increase their Distempers, can have no Part with him. So that whoever cherishes any criminal Passion, and continues in this Way till his *Exit* out of this Life, whither, alas, must he go! Heaven will not receive him; neither are the Flames of Purgatory sufficient to cleanse him. No other Place remains then for him, but that of everlasting Horror and Confusion; where being incapable of Change, his Soul will for ever remain under those very Disorders, in which Death found him.

I know there are many, who being engaged in some sinful Habit, and terrified with the Considerations of Death and Eternity, have frequent Thoughts, and seemingly, at least, resolve to reform their Lives. But I know not how their old Habits, pressing daily hard upon them, and their sinful Inclinations still gaining Ground by being often gratified, these good Thoughts and Resolutions often come to nothing; nay, what is worse, serve only to lessen their Fears, and betray them into a kind of Security, by making them think themselves better than they really

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are, because they seemingly resolve to be so for the future. And thus they usually drill on till they are either surpris'd by a sudden and unprovided Death, or at least reduced to the last and miserable Shift of a Death-bed Repentance.

I hope this will never be the Case of any one here present. However, let us now suppose, which God forbid, that any of you should fall into your last Sickness, whilst engaged in any vicious Habit, as of Cursing and Swearing, Drunkenness, Impurity, or the like; do you rightly apprehend the Consequence of it? If you do not, give me leave to represent it to you. The Consequence is, that in the Case suppos'd you have no other Hazard for your Soul's Salvation than that of a Death-bed Repentance. The Consequence is evident. For if a mortal Distemper should seize you, whilst you are yet engaged in any Habit of Sin, all you have to depend upon is that Preparation, which your last Sickness will allow you to make; and that I call a Death-bed Repentance.

You'll say, perhaps, you have no Thoughts of hazarding your Soul upon so dangerous an After-game. I believe you have not; but you deceive yourselves. For though you do not expressly design any such Thing, the Devil does. And if
you

you pursue those very Courses, which will most certainly, sooner or later, bring you to it, what matter is it, whether you design it or not? No Man designs expressly to damn himself; and yet too many, God knows, study as effectually their own Damnation, as if they expressly design'd it. And so it happens in the Case before us. For tho' very few are so desperately mad as to resolve expressly to hazard all upon a Death-bed Repentance, yet all those, who continue from Year to Year in their sinful Habits, take almost as direct a Way to it, as if they form'd an express Design of it. And therefore the Devil is not so very solicitous to engage Sinners in so desperate a Resolution, because he finds his Work almost as effectually done without it. Nay, he often seeks to amuse them with seeming Resolutions of changing their Lives in good time, so to hide from them the Precipice into which they are running; the Sight whereof might frighten them into safer Courses. All he has to do in the mean Time, is to continue them on in their wonted Relapses till their last Sicknes overtakes them; and then the Necessity of depending upon a Death-bed Repentance follows of course.

Let me therefore once more put this Question to you; *Is your House in Order?*

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Are your Souls in a Readiness for Death? Would you be willing to be summoned to your last Account this very Day? Have you already made a sufficient Preparation for it? Happy they, who can confidently say they have. Happy they, who are so beforehand with the great Work of Salvation, that their last Hour, whenever it comes, may find it fully finished.

The Third ENTERTAINMENT.

+ Of sudden Deaths.

Be watchful; for ye know not the Day nor Hour, Matt. xxv. 13.

TH O' nothing be more certain than Death, nothing is more uncertain than the Time and Circumstances of it. So that no Man, tho' in the most perfect State of Health, can make any Guess, whether Death will come early or late; whether it will be natural or violent: finally, whether it will be sudden or foreseen. And this of all the Circumstances hid from us is the most frightful. For tho'

tho' the precise Time of its coming were kept from our Knowledge, yet if we were but sure it would not seize us on a sudden, this at least would be some Comfort. But, alas, this Comfort is denied us; and the Reason why it is denied us is, because God will oblige us to be always watchful, and in a readiness for his Summons at what Time soever, and in what Manner soever he shall please to call upon us.

For this Reason, I say, God has concealed from us not only the Time of our Death, but every Circumstance relating to it. So that of all the Goods we possess in this World, Life itself is the most uncertain, nor have we the least Encouragement to build any Security upon it. It may be taken from us when we think least of it, and in so sudden a Manner as to leave us no Interval of Time between perfect Health and the Stroke of Death. 'Tis upon these Terms we first entered into the World, and we continue in it upon the same uncertain Footing. The Subject then of this Entertainment shall be the Uncertainty of human Life, and the many Dangers to which it is exposed of being taken from us by a sudden Death.

Death being the Punishment of Sin, and all Men since the Fall of *Adam* being conceived and born in Sin, it follows that

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Life is no sooner communicated to us, but we come within the general Sentence of Death, and are doom'd to die even before we are born. Hence many pass immediately from the Womb to the Grave, and are never allowed to see the Sun shine upon them. Others step no sooner into the World, but go off again immediately, as if they came upon no other Business than to die. Others again, after having with much care and nursing gone through the most dangerous Part of Life, disappoint in a Moment the flattering Hopes of their tender Parents, and become a Prey to Death, when they are just of Age to begin to taste the Pleasures of Life.

'Tis true, great Numbers survive this Age, and have a longer Lease of Life allowed them: And most of us here present are bound to acknowledge the Divine Bounty, in having favoured us with this Blessing. However, since Sentence of Death is already passed upon us, we are but in the Condition of condemned Criminals, reprieved untill such Time as it shall please the Sovereign Arbiter of Life and Death to give his Orders for our Execution. In the mean time, every Step we make during the short Course of this mortal Life, brings us still nearer to the Grave: and it often happens, that whilst
Men

Men are pleasing themselves with the Thoughts of a long and merry Life, they find themselves all of a sudden in the Hands of Death, and hurried to the other World at a Time as unwelcome perhaps as unexpected.

This was the unhappy Fate of the *Rich Man* mentioned in the Gospel, who whilst he was projecting how to indulge himself with the Treasures he had laid up, was summoned to render his Soul the very Night he was amusing himself with these vain Thoughts. This was also the unfortunate End of *Baltazar*, that proud King of *Babylon*; who amidst his drunken Cups, and profane Night-revels, but too often practised by our modern Christians, saw a Hand upon the Wall before him writing the Sentence of his Condemnation, which was accordingly executed upon him that very Night.

How many have been struck dead in the very Moment they were gratifying some criminal Passion! How many have been called to the Tribunal of God with the Cup in their Hands, or *Blasphemy* or *Perjury* in their Mouths! In a Word, how many have laid themselves down to Sleep in as perfect Health as any of us all, and never more saw the rising Sun! or risen in the Morning as sound in Body, as

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sick perhaps in Soul, and have not been allowed to outlive that Day!

Now the natural Reason of this great Uncertainty of human Life is first and chiefly the very Structure of Man's Body, in regard of the incredible Number and Variety of Parts, whereof it is composed: and amongst which many, particularly those that lodge, and convey the Blood and vital Spirits from Part to Part, are so slender and weak, that it seems next to a Miracle, that some of them are not broken with every sudden or violent Motion of the Body, and yet so necessary to the Preservation of Life, that the Breaking of any may prove fatal to it.

So that Man's Body may be fitly compared to an artificial Machine, composed of innumerable little Springs and Wheels, the Stopping or Breaking of any of which either stops all the rest, or at least causes an Irregularity in their Motion, and puts the whole Machine out of order. For just so it happens in Man's Body, which consisting of innumerable little Parts of different Sorts, and all depending upon each other, and contributing to the Harmony of the whole; if but any of them receives a Hurt, or happens to be discomposed, the whole Machine of the Body is affected with it, and in danger of being destroyed.

Thus

Thus many have been killed with an inward Bruise, the cutting of an Artery, or breaking of a Vein. Infomuch that Anatomists, whose Business it is to study the Structure of human Bodies, considering the prodigious Number of Veins, Fibres, Arteries, Sinews, Muscles, Nerves, and other Parts of which they are composed, assure us that the unhappy Fate of those, who are taken away by sudden or untimely Deaths, is more to be lamented than wondered at, and that we rather ought to be surpris'd that greater Numbers fall not daily under the like Misfortune.

But besides the Dependance our Lives have upon the Harmony of such numberless and different Parts, that enter into the Composition of Man's Body, they also depend upon several outward Things, as *Meat, Drink, Air*, and the like; which often, instead of preserving them, are instrumental to their Destruction. Thus when an epidemical Distemper reigns, the Air itself being for the most Part infected, 'tis dangerous even to breathe, tho' we cannot live one Moment without it. Thus Death is often conveyed to us from the Breath or Cloaths of those we converse with. Thus finally many meet their Death in the very *Meat, or Drink, or Physick,*
which

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which they take to prevent it. May not a mortal Fever be caught in a Moment, and send the strongest Man alive to his Grave in a few Days warning? *Surfeits*, *Pleurisies*, and *Quinsies*, often make a quicker Dispatch, and *Apoplexies* give no Warning at all.

Add to all this the innumerable Accidents which have no inward Cause, but attack us from abroad, and cannot be prevented with the greatest Caution possible; as the Fall of a Horse, the overturning of a Coach, an accidental Fire, or such as are occasioned by Thunder, Lightning, or violent Storms. And are not some of these the daily Ministers of sudden Deaths? Do not the weekly Bills of Mortality of one great City only furnish us almost continually with some Instances of this Nature? so that what with the frail Structure of our Bodies on the one hand, and the innumerable Accidents to which they are exposed on the other, Man's Life hangs by so weak and slender a Thread, that nothing but the greatest Blindness and Stupidity imaginable can make us hazard our eternal Salvation upon the long Continuance of it.

'Tis certain, that considering both the Greatness of the Hazard, and the eternal Consequences depending upon it, there
needs

needs no more to oblige all Men, that are not wholly lost to Faith and Reason, to live with the same Watchfulness and Precaution, as if they were infallibly assured, that a sudden Death would be their Lot some time or other. We ought indeed to pray and hope it will not : But 'tis most certain, no Man can have a positive Security against it. For since the natural and immediate Causes are either the usual Accidents from abroad, against which there is no Shelter, or the inward Dispositions of the Body, which are so hidden and secret, that no Man can tell how near the Danger threatens, what manner of Assurance can any Man have that a sudden Death will not be his Destiny?

'Tis true, there is an over-ruling Providence, which governs all Things, *reaches strongly from End to End, and disposes all Things sweetly* : So that, as *Christ* himself assures us, there falls not even a single Hair from our Heads but by its Orders. Our mortal Bodies, as they are God's Workmanship no less than our immortal Souls, so are they no less the Object of his Care. And tho' we ourselves are under him entrusted with the Management of them, and are bound to perform our Parts to the utmost of our Power, yet since we are but as Instruments under his Direction, 'tis the
same

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same invifible and unerring Hand, by which they were firft formed, that now rules and guides them; and can, if it pleafes, conduct them fafe through all the Stages of Human Life, to the natural End of their mortal Race. And therefore, 'tis not to be questioned, but Almighty God, who is the fupreme Caufe and firft Mover of all Things, has it in his Power to difpofe natural Caufes fo, as to preferve us from all Accidents of fudden and untimely Deaths.

All this, I fay, is true, and 'tis the greateft Comfort good Chriftians have, to confider that they live under the Conduct and Protection of an all-ruling Providence, which will not permit any thing to happen to them, but what may contribute to their greater Good, and the Security of their eternal Welfare; fo that the many Perils wherewith they live encompassed, ferve only to excite their Fervour in good Works, and increafe their Truft and Confidence in God, to whom they cry out with full Affurance in thefe Words of the *Pfalmift*, *though I fhall walk in the midft of the Shade of Death, I will fear no Evil becaufe thou art with me.*

But in all this there is not the leaft Encouragement or Comfort for ill Livers, and their Cafe is in all Refpects as different as their

their Lives from that of the Just. The Reason hereof is very plain ; because, tho' there be a *general Providence*, that extends itself to all Mankind, yet there is besides a *special* one, which only regards God's faithful Servants, and in which ill Livers have no Share. The three *Israelites* walked in the *Babylonian* Furnace as in a refreshing Air, whilst those, who kindled the Flames, were consumed by them. *Daniel* was as safe in the Midst of *Lions*, as in the Company of *Lambs* ; whereas his Accusers could scarce reach the Ground, before they were devoured by them. 'Tis true, these Events being miraculous, no general Rule can be drawn from them. But whether God makes use of supernatural Means, or employs natural Causes to bring about the Designs of his Providence, the Effect is the same ; and tho' we see not manifest Miracle, it is not to be doubted, but God disposes natural Causes so in Favour of his faithful Servants, as to protect them from a thousand Accidents, in which they would have perished, without his special Providence watching over them.

But suppose a sudden Death should be the Lot of a just Man, as it sometimes comes to pass, and has happened even to great Saints, we can look upon it no otherwise than as a providential Mercy upon him ;

him; Almighty God making use of this Way to preserve him from the usual Terrors of Death, to hasten his Passage to a better Life, and perhaps to prevent his falling into Occasions, which might have drawn him into Sin. But to ill Livers a sudden Death is always an irreparable Evil, since it deprives them in an Instant of every Thing in which they placed their Happiness in this Life, and throws them into a State of endless Misery and Torments. So that the very same Thing, which may be a Mercy to the Just, and turn to their greater Good, as all Things do by the secret Dispensations of Providence, is on the contrary the severest Judgment that can fall upon Sinners. And yet these very Persons, who alone have Reason to apprehend a sudden Death, are they who usually fear it the least: And the Reason why they fear it least, is not their Courage, but Stupidity. They choose rather to hazard dying any way, without thinking of it, than to disturb their Pleasures with the Thought of so ungrateful an Object: And so it naturally follows, that as they seldom or never think of Death, they are the most liable to be surpris'd by it.

But what Way soever we consider sudden Deaths, whether with regard to natural or supernatural Causes, 'tis manifest, that none
have

have greater Reason to apprehend their perishing that way, than they, whose disorderly Lives deserve no better Fate, and are often the natural Occasion of it. How many have perished in unjust Quarrels, occasioned by Luxury, Gaming, or Night-Revels! How many destroy themselves by excessive Debauches! Or, by a long Course of Irregularities, lay a Train of natural Dispositions, whence Apoplexies, or other immediate Causes of sudden Deaths, are gradually formed?

But let us suppose the Strength of their natural Constitution renders them Proof against Accidents of that Nature, (of which however no Man can be sure) what Shelter have they against Misfortunes that may surprise them from abroad? If they say they are upon as good a Footing as the rest of Mankind, this is a great Mistake, unless they mean that Part of Mankind which is as bad as themselves. Pious Christians are under the special Protection of Almighty God; and if they die suddenly, Death renders them eternally happy; to both which Advantages ill Livers have forfeited their Title. They are God's Enemies, and, as they have withdrawn themselves from the Order established by his Holy Law, so he withdraws from them the Benefit of that peculiar Providence,
with.

with which he watches over his obedient Servants. So that when the Time is come, in which he designs to make any of them Examples of his Justice, he abandons them to their unhappy Destiny. He neither keeps Danger at a Distance from them, nor removes them out of the Reach of Danger. And tho' in all this there appears nothing out of the ordinary Course of Nature, yet the Execution of these Criminals is as particularly ordered by the Divine Justice, as if the Hand of God appeared visibly in it: His infinite Wisdom disposing natural Causes in such a Manner as to give them an infallible Tendency to the End for which they are designed. But whatever Name we give to sudden Deaths of this Nature, whether we call them *Accidents* or *Judgments*, according as they have a Reference to several Causes, they are equally fatal in their Consequence, and the Punishment is equally severe, whether it be immediately inflicted by the Hand of God, or occasioned by what we call *Ebance*, because eternal Death is the infallible Consequence of it.

However, that there may be no room left to doubt, but that the sudden Death of Sinners may be regarded as a design'd Punishment of their ill Lives, the Word of God threatens them expressly with it, as is
manifest

manifest from St. Paul's Epistle to the *Theſſalonians*, Chap. v. ver. 3. where he tells them, *that Death ſhall ſeize upon the Wicked like a Thief in the Night : and when they ſhall ſay Peace and Safety, then ſudden Deſtruction ſhall come upon them, as Travail upon a Woman with Child, and they ſhall not eſcape.* And our Saviour ſays no leſs in the twenty-fourth Chapter of St. *Matthew* ; where having exhorted his Diſciples to be watchful, he propoſes to them the Parable of the good and wicked Servant, which he concludes with theſe remarkable Words : *But if the evil Servant ſhall ſay in his Heart, my Lord delays his Coming, and ſhall begin to ſmite his Fellow-ſervants, and eat and drink with the drunken ; the Lord of that Servant ſhall come in the Day when he looks not for it, and in the Hour that he is not aware of ; and ſhall cut him aſunder, and appoint him his Portion with the Hypocrites, where there ſhall be weeping and gnawing of Teeth.* From which Words it plainly appears, that ſudden Deaths ought many times to be conſidered not barely as the Effect of Chance or Conſtitution, but as a particular Punishment of Sin, and a juſt Revenge upon Sinners ; God in his ſecret Judgments ordering it ſo, that they, who in the Courſe of their Lives neglected
the

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the ordinary Means to dispose themselves for Death, should in the End want the Opportunity and Benefit of a particular Preparation for it.

But, O good God ! what Tongue is able to express the fatal Consequences of such a Death ! What becomes of a Soul charged with the Guilt of mortal Sin at the Moment of her Separation from the Body ! She is hurried in an Instant to the dreadful Tribunal, receives her irrevocable Doom, is banished from the Sight of God, and plunged into Hell-fire ; where Shame and Despair, Horror and Confusion, Remorse without Ease, and Torments without Comfort, are to be her everlasting Portion.

O God, preserve us from this Misfortune. Let any but that which is irreparable happen to us. Enable us with thy Grace to live so, that we may die the Death of the Just ; and conduct us thro' whatever Ways thou pleasest, so they but bring us to the happy End for which we are created.

The

The Fourth ENTERTAINMENT.

Some practical Inferences drawn from the Uncertainty of Human Life, and the Danger of sudden Deaths.

Be watchful, for ye know not the Day nor Hour, Matt. xxv. 13.

HAVING in my last Discourse laid before you the Uncertainty of Human Life, the weak Foundation upon which it is built, how many Accidents may rob us of it, and, what is most frightful, how little Security we have that it will not be snatch'd from us by a sudden Death; it remains now to improve these Truths, by drawing some instructive Inferences from them, which shall be the Subject of this Entertainment.

The first instructive Inference to be drawn from the Uncertainty of Human Life is, that we ought not to set our Hearts upon any Thing in this World. For is it not a Folly to set our Hearts upon Things which Death may rob us of every Moment, and will certainly take away from us some time or other? 'Tis the Argument our Saviour made use of to his Disciples,

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Disciples, to wean their Hearts from the World, and turn their Affections towards Heaven. *Lay not up Treasures* (says Christ) *for yourselves upon Earth, where the Moth and the Worm does corrupt, and where Thieves break in and steal.* For what wise Man would be solicitous to lay up Treasures, or set his Heart upon them, if he were sure they were all to become a Prey to Thieves? Now Death is the great Thief, who always lies in Wait for us, and will sooner or later rifle all our worldly Goods, and strip us naked of whatever we possess. For we must all go as naked out of the World, as we first entered into it. Honours, Riches, Pleasures, Friends and Relations, all must be left behind; only our Works, whether good or bad, will stick to us, and accompany us to the Tribunal of God, either to condemn or save us. So that the whole World perishes as effectually to every dying Man, as if it were at that Instant reduced to Ashes. And is it not then a notorious Folly to set our Hearts upon it, or love any Thing in it to the Prejudice of our eternal Salvation?

For this Reason St. Paul writes thus to the *Corinthians*; *This therefore, Brethren, I say unto you, Time is short. It remains then that both those, who have Wives, be as if they had them not; and those who weep,*
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be as if they wept not; and those who rejoice, be as if they rejoiced not; and those who buy, be as if they possessed not; and those who use this World, be as if they used it not; for the Figure of this World passes, 1 Cor. vii. 29, 30, 31. By which Words he exhorts them to keep their Hearts so free and disengaged from all inordinate Affections to the Things of this Life, that even amidst the Possession and Use of them, they may enjoy the same Liberty of Spirit, as if they had effectually renounced both the one and the other.

For the same Reason St. Peter exhorts all Christians to be as *Pilgrims* or *Travellers* in this World; because as Travellers, tho' they make use of the Conveniencies they meet with upon the Road, yet have always principally an Eye upon the proposed End of their Journey, so Christians ought to have their Thoughts so turn'd towards Death, and the World to come, which is the End of their Journey, that whilst they use indeed the Things of this Life, according to the Order of Providence, that is, within the Bounds of Necessity or reasonable Convenience, their Hearts may still remain free, or, as St. Peter expresses it, *abstain from fleshly Lusts*, that is, from all Sorts of inordinate Love, or immoderate Desire of Creatures. And truly, since
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all inordinate Affections are contrary to the Christian Spirit, and an Obstacle to Salvation, this alone ought to be Motive enough to keep our Hearts free from them. But the Difficulties they will one Day add to the natural Terrors of Death, is a no less powerful Consideration to make us apply ourselves to an entire Disengagement from all Clogs of this Nature. To die, is in itself a terrible Thing, Nature startles at the Thought of it, and the Fear of Judgment very much increases its Terror; but to die with a Heart full of the Love of the World is frightful beyond Imagination.

This appeared plainly in the unfortunate *Agag*, who having wallow'd in all the Pleasures of a voluptuous Life, when he saw himself just ready to fall a Sacrifice to the Divine Vengeance, cried out with the deepest Anguish of Mind, *Does bitter Death separate so?* For what a racking Thought must it needs be to a Lover of this World, when seeing himself at the Point of Death, he considers that he must now be in a Moment torn away from all those Things, in which he has till then placed all his Happiness, Content, and Satisfaction! He has till then been passionately fond of Pleasures; and now he must enjoy them no more. He has set his Heart
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upon Riches, and now he must leave all behind. He has made some wretched Creature the Idol of his Passion, and now he finds himself condemned to an eternal Separation from that Object. O! could we but see the Heart of a Person dying under these unhappy Circumstances, we should there discover a frightful Scene of Terror, Grief, and Anguish. We should find there fully verified this Saying of Eccl. *O Death, how bitter is thy Memory to a Man, who places his Content in the Enjoyment of his Wealth!* So that to entertain or nourish in ourselves any worldly Passion, or violent Inclination, is in the effect to nourish a Viper, which will one Day gnaw our very Bowels. 'Tis to prepare the Torture for ourselves, and sow the Seeds of future Dejection and Despair: which, tho' stifled amidst the Business, Amusements, and Diversions of Life, will not fail to produce their full Effect at the terrible Approach of Death. And therefore since we are uncertain how near we are already to it, we ought to lose no Time, but hasten all we can to remove from our Hearts all such inordinate Affections, as are most like to increase the Difficulties of our last Hour, and heighten the Terrors which Death brings naturally with it: And this, as I have said, is the first practical

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Inference to be drawn from the Uncertainty of human Life.

The Second is, that we ought to set a great Value upon the Time present, and manage it with the utmost Care; For since Time is given us by God for the gaining of Eternity, it follows, that if we but manage it as we ought, we may improve it into an infinite Good, because an infinite Good may be purchased with it: and this suffices to shew it is a Treasure of inestimable Value. But if we farther consider that the Possession of this inestimable Treasure is wholly uncertain, and cannot be secured to us by any Power under Heaven, even for one single Day, as being liable to all the Accidents to which Man's Life is exposed; 'tis plain we cannot, without manifest Folly, and the Hazard of losing all, neglect the Improvement of those precious Moments, whereof we are actually in possession. For if we esteem those little better than Fools, who wilfully let slip an Opportunity of any considerable temporal Advantage, because the like may perhaps never be offered again; how great a Folly must we then judge those guilty of, who having it in their Power to lay up Treasures for Eternity, either waste away the Opportunity that is given them, or employ it to their own infinite Prejudice, when at the
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same time they are not only uncertain how soon it may be taken from them ; but are also sure, that when 'tis once lost, 'tis never more to be recovered ! This certainly is a Folly not to be parallel'd, and as far beyond all Example now, as the fatal Consequences of it will be without Remedy hereafter. Oh ! what a stabbing Thought is it to the damn'd Souls in Hell to reflect that *Time will be no more !* A thousand Daggers wound not half so sensibly as this one single Thought. 'Tis the everlasting *Worm*, that gnaws them without Intermission, and gives a double Sting to all their Torments.

Consider therefore that Time, if it be managed as it ought, is the richest Jewel we possess ; that the Continuance of it is wholly uncertain ; that at best we cannot hold it very long, and when it is once lost, it is lost for ever. Whence we must conclude, according to my second Inference, that as the Time present, of which alone we are secure, challenges our highest Value, so we ought to manage it to the best Advantage of our Souls, both in order to redeem as well as we can what is yet to come, as to make it fully answer all the great Ends, for which it is bestow'd upon us.

But since Life is not only uncertain, but may also end in a sudden Death, there remains a third Inference to be drawn particularly from this Consideration, and 'tis our Saviour's own Inference contain'd in these Words, *be watchful, for ye know not the Day nor Hour.* We ought therefore to be so watchful over ourselves, as never to be unprovided. For tho' there be no Fence against a sudden Death, yet every Christian may secure himself against an unprovided one, since every one has it in his Power to live so, as to be always prepared; whereas, if he be at any Time unprepared, he exposes himself to all the fatal Consequences of a sudden Death, because it may happen to him, whilst he is in that Condition. For which Reason our blessed Saviour, as he frequently forewarned his Disciples of the Suddenness of his future Coming, representing it under diverse Parables or Similitudes, to imprint the more lively Ideas of it in their Hearts, so he generally concluded his Discourses relating to that Subject with this Admonition, *be therefore watchful, for ye know not the Day nor Hour.*

Who would not think indeed, but that so express an Admonition, delivered by Christ himself, nay, and inculcated with such frequent Repetitions, should abundantly

dantly suffice to cure Men of the deepest Lethargy, and awake them into the greatest Care and Watchfulness over themselves? considering especially the dreadful Mischiefs that attend the Neglect of it. But, alas, the Case is quite otherwise; for is there any thing more directly opposite to the Watchfulness required of us than the State of mortal Sin! wherein whoever dies is lost without Remedy. And yet how many continue in this unhappy State wittingly and knowingly, I will not say for many Days, Weeks, or Months, but even Years together! Nay, are they not as gay and unconcern'd under it, as if every Thing were as safe and well as they could wish? O God, what a Blindness and Infatuation is this! that Men, who believe there is another World to come, wherein the Just will be eternally rewarded, and the Wicked eternally punished, should have the Boldness to hazard themselves in a State, from which, if Death should seize them in it, they must immediately pass to everlasting Torments!

What is it that makes Men run thus desperately upon their own eternal Ruin? How comes this Contradiction in their Nature, that being such Lovers of themselves, they are at the same time such Enemies to their own true Happiness? How

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comes it that, hating and flying above all Things whatever is painful, they are not aw'd with the Fear of *Hell-fire*? Is it the Hopes of atoning for all by a future Repentance? Alas, how many have been deceived and utterly lost that Way? How many have we either personally known or heard of, who depending upon the like presumptuous Hope, have at length been either hardened in Sin before they came to die, or suddenly cut off in the midst of all their Disorders? For truly to run on in a wilful Course of Sin upon a Project of making all Scores clear by an After-Repentance, looks so like laying a Design to baffle the Divine Justice, and get Heaven by a Cheat, that God seems, as it were, bound in Honour to defeat the wicked Policy of such insolent Sinner, by disappointing their Presumption, and refusing them the Mercy, which they abused into an Encouragement to Sin.

The Book of *Judges* furnishes me with an historical Passage, very applicable to my present Purpose. 'Tis the Relation of the magical End of *Sisara* King *Jabin's* General, who having been for about twenty Years the Scourge of God upon the *Israelites*, was marching against them at the Head of a formidable Army. The *Israelites*, in this their Distress, had recourse
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to God's Mercy; who hearing their Prayers, ordered them to meet their Enemy with a Body of ten thousand Men under the Command of *Barack*.

Sisara, whose Army was much superior in Number, and flush'd with a long Course of prosperous Success, reckoned securely upon the Victory. But he found his Death where he thought to meet a Triumph. For the Battle was no sooner begun, but God struck his whole Army with a panick Fear and general Consternation; insomuch that *Sisara* himself, being also seized with Terror, betook himself to flight; whilst the *Israelites* broke in upon and destroyed his whole Army.

As *Sisara* was thus endeavouring to save himself by Flight, a Woman named *Jabel* offered him her House for Sanctuary, which he willingly accepted of; for here he thought himself out of Danger. Wherefore being much fatigued he desired some Refreshment, drank heartily, and laid himself down to sleep. But it cost him very dear. For *Jabel* perceiving him fast asleep, struck a Nail through his Head, fastened him to the Ground, and delivered up his Body to *Barack*, who was in pursuit of him.

This is a lively Figure of the unhappy End of but too many Sinners. They are
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God's Enemies, and, as I may say, at open War against him; he permits them to prosper in this Life, and his Patience and long Forbearance, instead of moving them to Repentance, makes them grow insolent, and flatter themselves with a false Security; in this Condition they *drink Iniquity like Water*; they fall into a lethargick Sleep, and their Hearts are, as it were, nail'd to the Earth. God's Wrath is in the mean time in close pursuit of them; Death suddenly overtakes them, and delivers them up to the Divine Justice. And so these miserable Wretches are at length awakened by the scorching Flames of Hell, whom neither the Advice of Friends or ghostly Father, nor God's secret Inspirations, nor the loud Thunder of his Threats could awake, whilst they were yet in a Condition to prevent the fatal Blow by a timely Repentance.

Oh! let their Misfortune be at least a Warning to us. Let their past Follies be our Instruction. 'Tis better to grow wise at the Expence of others, than by our own Experience. Nay, if we should tread in their Footsteps, and miscarry the same Way, our Folly will be the more unpardonable in suffering ourselves to be shipwreck'd upon a Rock, which has already so many Marks set upon it. Oh! if any
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of those miserable Souls, who are now burning in the Flames of Hell, could but obtain with all their Tears and bitter Sufferings, the bare Remainder of this very Day, what Price, what Value would they set upon it! How solicitous would they be not to let one Moment of it slip unprofitably out of their Hands! And why then will we not resolve to take the same Method? Why will any one be so bent upon his own Destruction, as to run on blindly in a Course, which brought them, and will at length bring him to everlasting Misery and Torments? For since the same Means tend naturally to the self-same End, can any one pretend to act the same unhappy Part as they did, and be in no danger of being involved in the same Misfortune? Can he presume to go to Heaven, by walking in that Path which brought them to Hell? Or has he Power of Life and Death more in his Hands than they had? Is he not liable to the same Accidents as they, and may not Death surprise him, as it did them?

You will say, perhaps, 'tis true, it is not impossible but you may die suddenly: However, since this happens but to few, 'tis more probable you will have Warning to prepare yourselves beforehand. But do we argue at this wild Rate, when any

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temporal Concern is at stake? You all know very well, that in securing Land or Money, all Accidents possible are nicely consider'd, and the very same Measures and Precautions taken, as if it were certain that they would happen. And why then should we be less cautious in the Business of our eternal Salvation! Why will we put it to any Hazard at all, when we have it in our Power to secure it absolutely! For allowing it to be less probable, 'tis possible, at least, we may die suddenly. And is not that enough, considering what lies at Stake! Is not that, I say, enough to oblige us to take the safest Course we can to prevent the fatal Consequences of it in case it should happen! For whatever is possible, tho' barely possible, may absolutely happen; and if it should happen whilst we are in Sin, let us reflect seriously what the Consequence will be: Because if what we hazard by being in the State of Sin were either of small Moment, or being once lost might be again recovered, the Case would be much altered. But we must consider, that the Thing we expose to doubtful Chance, being in that State, is not only of the highest Value imaginable, and surpasses infinitely all the Treasures of this World, but if we once lose it, the Loss is irreparable; nay, over and above, the

the Miseries we hazard to throw ourselves into, are inexpressible and without Remedy. And therefore of whatever Nature the Chance may be, that can bring such a Misfortune upon us, whether probable, or barely possible, 'tis a Madness to be ever unprepared for it.

I shall therefore repeat once more the important Admonition of Christ, which we must consider as address'd to ourselves; *Be watchful, for ye know not the Day nor Hour.* Let no Man depend either upon Youth or Health; for neither Youth nor Health can afford any Security against the Stroke of Death. We may be in perfect Health to-day, and dead to-morrow. Nay, many thousands have been in perfect Health the very Hour or Moment before they fell into Hell-Fire. But if we desire an infallible Security against all Possibility of being surpris'd by Death, nothing can procure us that Happiness but a well-ordered Conscience, and the Friendship of Almighty God. For whoever enjoys that Blessing, may indeed die suddenly, but cannot be surpris'd by Death, as being always in a Readiness for it.

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The Fifth ENTERTAINMENT.

Difficulties attending a Death-bed Repentance.

Delay not to be converted to the Lord, and put it not off from Day to Day, Eccles. v. 8.

FROM what has hitherto been said concerning the Uncertainty of the Time and other Circumstances of Death on the one hand, and the many Dangers and sudden Accidents to which we live exposed on the other, it appears plainly that they, who continue in a Custom of living in a sinful State, run a very great Hazard either of dying without any Preparation at all, or at the best of being reduced to the last shift of depending wholly upon that Preparation which their last Sicknefs will allow them, and which we usually call a *Death-bed Repentance*; which being generally look'd upon as a most dangerous After-game in a Concern of the highest Nature, shews the Importance of the Advice dictated by the Holy Ghost in these sacred Words, *Delay not to be converted*

verted to the Lord, and put it not off from Day to Day.

Here then is the proper Place to examine, what Judgment we ought to make of the Repentance of a dying Man; that is, whether a Person, who has neglected the Means of Salvation in time of Health, and run on in a Course of sinful Practices till he falls into his last Sickness, be then in any tolerable Condition to accomplish the great Work of a sincere Reconciliation to God.

However, I am far from intending either to extenuate the Power of God's *Grace*, or set Bounds to his *Mercy*. For I know that neither the one nor the other are to be measured by our short Line. His *Grace* can change the most corrupt Heart in an Instant, and his *Mercy* never rejects a Heart truly changed. And for that Reason the most profligate Sinner upon Earth, tho' reduced to the very last Extremity, ought never to despair. Because he knows not but the same infinite Goodness that received a Thief at the last Gasps into Favour, may also be moved to have Compassion on him in that Extremity.

The Question therefore is not, whether a Person, reduced to these unhappy Circumstances, is bound to hope in God's Mercies, and do what he can to be reconciled.

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ciled to him; for this admits of no dispute; because, tho' he has lived an Unchristian Life, he is bound to do his best to prepare himself for a Christian Death. But since the Preparation for such a Death cannot be without a sincere *Love of God*, and a true *Hatred of Sin*, both which must be the Effect of *Grace*, the whole Question is reduced to this one single Point, *viz.* whether a Person, who has always lived a Stranger to the Virtues of *Repentance*, and the *Love of God*, and been accustomed for many Years to resist the Motions of *Grace*, will in his last Sickness be favoured with such an extraordinary Assistance, as will enable him in that State of Terror, Pain, and Anguish, to work a total Change in the Disposition of his Soul.

'Tis very true, the Thing is not impossible, because no Wound is incurable to the omnipotent Hand of God, and therefore ought not to be despaired of by the unfortunate Party, who has run the Hazard of it. But as it is a heinous Crime to despair at any time of God's Mercy, so it is the highest Strain of Madness in any Person to lay before-hand a Design of depending upon an extraordinary Grace, and reduce himself to a State, in which nothing under such a Blessing can save him. My Business then at present is to shew, that a
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Death-bed Conversion after a sinful Life continued to a Person's last Sickness, is nothing less than the Effect of an extraordinary Grace; and by Consequence not to be depended upon.

To make it appear that the Conversion of a Sinner upon his Death-bed is the Effect of an extraordinary Grace, it will be requisite to let you know what I mean by an extraordinary Grace. I say then that an extraordinary Grace is that which is bestowed without the Use of the ordinary Means ordained by God for the obtaining of it; because, tho' all Grace whatsoever be a pure Gift of God, he rarely bestows the Grace of a total and sincere Conversion but on those who employ the Means ordained by him to dispose themselves for it. So that when a Sinner is converted without the previous Use of those Means, his Conversion is extraordinary, and by consequence the Effect of an extraordinary Grace.

Now then to shew that a Death-bed Repentance is a Conversion of this Kind, we must examine two Things; 1. What are the ordinary Means of a Sinner's Conversion. And, 2. Whether a dying Man be in a Condition to put these Means in Practice; for if he be not, 'tis evident he has nothing but an extraordinary Grace to depend

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depend upon. As to the ordinary Means of a Sinner's Conversion, they are mostly reduced under these four Heads, of *Prayer*, *spiritual Reading*, *Consideration*, and the Use of the *Sacraments*. For let us suppose a Person yet in perfect Health, should, after having lived in an habitual Practice of Vice, apply himself to a Spiritual Director, to consult with him about the Means of saving his Soul, what Method would he advise him to? It is not to be doubted but he would in the *first* Place exhort him to retire for some Time, at least as much as would be possible, from Company and worldly Business, in order to get Leisure and Opportunity to pour forth his Soul before God in the Exercise of *Prayer*. *2dly*, He would advise him to join frequent *Consideration* with spiritual Reading; and all this by way of a preparatory Exercise, to work him by degrees into a hearty Detestation of this Life past, and dispose him for the Benefit of the *Sacraments*.

And to shew how necessary it is to use this Method in the Case supposed, we need but compare the Condition of a Soul corrupted with a long Habit of Sin, with that of a Person labouring under an ill Habit of Body. For as in this Case no skilful Physician will pretend to cure the Party
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concern'd with a Dose or two, but will oblige him to enter into a regular Course of Physick, and prescribe him a uniform Method of Exercise and Diet, by Means whereof the whole Mass of Blood may by Degrees be corrected, and the Cause of the Distemper removed, so in the Case of a Soul all over vitiated with Sin, a few Doses of spiritual Physick will profit but little; but a Continuance and regular Course of Remedies is necessary.

'Tis true, if the Sacraments work'd their Effect without any previous Dispositions on the Part of the Penitent, a few Minutes would do as well as many Months or Years: For then whoever had but Time enough to confess, and have his Absolution pronounced before the Breath went out of his Body, woud die in the State of Salvation. But the Case is quite otherwise. There are preparatory Dispositions essentially necessary to qualify the Penitent for the Grace of the Sacraments. For the Heart must be truly changed, and the Will effectually turned from the irregular *Love of Creatures* to the *Love of God* above all Things.

Now this is a difficult Work, and requires both Time and Application more or less in Proportion to the Malignity of the Distemper, and the Root it has taken.

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For Grace works by Degrees like Nature, and as it usually hides itself under the Operation of mere natural Causes, so it conforms itself for the most Part to their Way of Operating, and seldom brings any thing to Perfection on a sudden. And therefore when God Almighty mercifully designs to recover an old Sinner from the ill State he is in, the first Disposition he usually forms towards it is to inspire him with an earnest Desire of his Cure; because the Desire of any Good naturally spurs us on to procure the Means in Order to it. But tho' this Desire, which is the first Step towards a Sinner's Conversion, be never so hearty, 'tis usually very imperfect for some Time as to its Motive; being for the most part wholly influenced at first by mere selfish Considerations, such as are the Uneasiness of a troubled Conscience, the Apprehension of God's Judgment, the Fear of Hell-fire, and the like: And all this may be without any *Hatred of Sin* for its own Sake, that is, purely as it is an *Offence of God*.

However, Almighty God makes use of this servile Fear in order to alarm him into a Concern and Solitude about the Means to shake off the Burden that oppresses him, and prevent the Evils wherewith he is threaten'd. This Concern and Solitude
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about the Means of his Cure obliges him to have Recourse to his spiritual Physician, and follow his Directions as to the Method of Praying, Reading, Meditating, and the like. By often Reading and Thinking upon Christian Truths, lively Ideas of them are insensibly form'd, and deeply fix'd in his Mind: His Understanding receives daily new Light: His Eyes are open'd by Degrees, and begin to see the Vanity of worldly Pleasures; the Grievousness and Enormity of Sin; the infinite Goodness of God; his Love in having sent his only Son to deliver him from the Bondage of Sin and Slavery of the Devil; his unwearied Patience in having borne so long with him, and unspeakable Mercy in not having cut him off in the midst of his Disorders, but still inviting him to Repentance.

These Considerations, as they sink deeper and deeper into his Mind, work proportionably upon the Will: His Heart is affected with them, and takes a new Bent. The Love of the World and its sinful Pleasures goes off insensibly, and a better Love enters in by the same Degrees. What was at first begun upon Motives of mere servile Fear, he now carries on upon higher Considerations. His Heart is soften'd into Compunction, his Soul is sensibly afflicted
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with the Thought of having lived so long an Enemy to God: He laments his Misfortune in having so often offended his infinite Goodness: He pours himself forth in Affections of Love, Admiration, and Thanksgiving; detests his past Sins, resolves to avoid all the Occasions of them, makes hearty Purposes of Amendment, is ready to submit to any penitential Works to satisfy the Divine Justice, and with these happy Dispositions approaches to the sacred Tribunal, in order to receive the infinite Blessing of Reconciliation with his heavenly Father.

Thus we see what are the ordinary Means appointed by God for the beginning, improving, and perfecting the great Work of a Sinner's Conversion; and the Degrees, through which he usually passes in making his Advances towards it. Now let us consider, whether a Person that has neglected all these Means in Time of Health, and run on to his very last Sickness in all his accustomed Disorders, and Habits of Sins; whether, I say, he be then in any tolerable Condition to put them in Practice. For if he be not, he has nothing but an extraordinary Grace to depend upon, as I have already said.

And, *first*, as to the Duty of *Prayer*, I only desire any one to reflect how little
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He is able to perform in that Kind, if he be but under some Uneasiness of Mind, or a little out of Order with the Head-ach, or any other trivial Indisposition. And how then can we be so senseless as to imagine that a Person seized with a mortal Distemper should be capable of praying with any tolerable Attention! For what Comparison is there between a slight Indisposition, which only affects some one particular Part, and a mortal Distemper, which usually puts the whole Body into a violent Ferment, and spreads an universal Uneasiness and Anguish over every Part of it. 'Tis evident, that the one must be by many degrees a greater Hindrance than the other to any Business that requires Thought and Presence of Mind. And therefore since we find by Experience that the Infirmary of the Spirit is so great, that it is apt to be overcome even by the lesser Opposition of the Body, there is but little Reason to presume, it will have Strength enough to bear up against Obstacles that are without all Comparison greater.

But as a Person in his last Sickness is but in a very ill Condition to *pray* as he ought, so is he much less capable of *Reading*; the Benefit whereof, and the Influence it has upon a Sinner's Conversion, is sufficiently known by Experience. But
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this Point is so clear that it needs no Proof. For to put Books into a dying Man's Hands is a Thing without Example. And here we find him under the greatest Disadvantage possible, in being deprived of one of the principal Helps to Salvation; it being this Exercise that should furnish him with proper Subjects for Consideration, and such Reflections, as might insensibly work his Soul into a truly penitential Disposition, and lead him thro' all the Degrees of a solid Conversion.

But this, you will say, may in some measure be supplied by others reading to him. I own something of this may be allowed; but then how many Hindrances are usually intervening in a Person's last Sickness to obstruct the Fruit of it! As frequent Visits of Friends, the Attendance and Tears of Relations about the sick Man's Bed, which usually affect him more sensibly than the most moving spiritual Lectures. Then Doctors and Apothecaries must frequently be sent for; and the Nurse is every now and then-busy about him, and telling you that too much Reading may hurt his Head, or hinder his Repose, and the like. So that in the winding up of the Bottom, all the Reading to help him with will amount to no more than some unconnected Scraps of spiritual Lectures; which

which tho' not altogether unuseful to such pious Souls as only stand in need of some little Helps to stir up their Hearts already well disposed, and revive the pious Ideas that have ever been familiar to them, will, I fear, prove to be of very little use to those, who are yet full of worldly Passions, all over corrupted with Habits of Sin, and stand in need of the most powerful Remedies to work an effectual Cure.

However, suppose the Hindrances from abroad should not be so great as they are here represented, are not the Pains of a dying Man alone sufficient to hinder him from receiving any considerable Impression from what is said or read to him at that time? For how should he receive Impressions from what he cannot attend to? Or how should he be capable of any serious Attention, when all his Thoughts are forcibly drawn another Way? Now is not this the Case of those who are under any violent Pain? 'Tis doubtless so. For it is the proper Nature of Pain to divert the Soul from all other Objects, and draw her whole Application to itself. Hence it is that *Praying, Reading, and Meditating* are Exercises that cannot be well performed, but when the Body is in some Measure at ease; because all these Exercises require a Composure and Presence of Mind; and
nothing

nothing affects the Mind more immediately either for its Advantage or Disadvantage, than the Disposition of the Body ; so that if the Body be disturbed with Pains, it immediately communicates its Disturbance to the Mind ; and a Mind disturbed can scarce think of any thing but the Cause of its Disturbance.

Now then since it is evident, that the Circumstances of a dying Man are such, as unqualify him in a great Measure for all the preparatory Exercises, that are the ordinary Means to dispose him for the Sacrament of Reconciliation, does it not manifestly follow, that the Conversion of a Sinner under these unhappy Circumstances, can be nothing less than the Effect of an extraordinary Grace ? The Consequence is clear and undeniable. Because, where ordinary Means fail, nothing but an extraordinary Power can supply the Defect. And I leave you now to judge, whether a Sinner has any Reason to presume beforehand, that God will in his last Extremity favour him with a Conversion of that Nature.

The Word of God has fore-warned us not to depend upon it. I shall only quote St. Paul, who, writing to the *Corinthians*, lays down this general Maxim, *That the End of Sinners will be according to their Works.*

Works. He repeats it again in his Epistle to the *Galatians* vi. where he tells them, that every Man shall *reap* as he has *sown*. Which imports the same Thing, nay expresses it in a most significant Metaphor. *Be not deceived*, says he, *God is not mocked. What a Man soweth, that also shall he reap. He that soweth in his Flesh, shall reap Corruption; but he that soweth in the Spirit shall reap Life everlasting*, Gal. vi. 6, 7. So that according to this Rule of St. Paul, Men generally die as they lived; and there is but too much Reason to judge of the Success of the one by the Method of the other.

'Tis true, there is scarce any general Rule without an Exception. But the whole Body of the Old and New Testament affords but one single Instance, that looks favourably upon Death-bed Penitents, I mean, the Conversion of the Thief upon the Cross; which was doubtless the Effect of an extraordinary Grace. And St. *Austin*, to prevent all Presumption on that Score, has marked out so many material Circumstances, which favoured the Conversion of that happy Sinner, and are altogether foreign to the Case before us, that is, of those who drive off their Repentance in hopes of the like Mercy, that I fear the

Tom. I.

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Example

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Example will afford them but little Encouragement. His Words are these:

“ Dearly beloved, lest perhaps the
 “ sudden Happiness of the believing Thief
 “ on the Cross should make any of you
 “ too secure and remiss; lest any one
 “ should say in his Heart, my guilty Con-
 “ science shall not trouble me; my sinful
 “ Life shall not make me sad, because I
 “ see a Thief obtain'd the Pardon of all his
 “ Sins in a Moment: we must consider in
 “ that Thief not barely the Shortness of
 “ his Faith and Confession, but the Great-
 “ ness of his Fervour, and the Circum-
 “ stances of Time, when even the perfect-
 “ est were staggering. — The Devil in-
 “ spires you with this Security to bring
 “ you to ruin. For he deceives himself,
 “ and makes a Jest of his own Damna-
 “ tion, who, persisting in Sin, imagines
 “ God will help him in his last Extremity.
 “ — The happy Thief, of whom I have
 “ spoken, neither designedly staved off
 “ from Time to Time the Business of
 “ Salvation, nor fraudulently forecasted the
 “ last Moments of his Life for the Cure
 “ of his Soul; nor resolved beforehand to
 “ hazard all his Hopes upon one despe-
 “ rate Cast at the Hour of Death; nei-
 “ ther had he any Knowledge of Religion,
 “ or of Christ, before that Time; For had
 “ he

“ he had any, it is probable he would have
“ been amongst the first of the Apostles,
“ who was first in the Kingdom of Hea-
“ ven.”

Thus St. *Austin*; and we may gather clearly from his Words, what his Thoughts were of Death-bed Penitents, since he will not allow them to be upon equal Footing with one, whose Life had been notoriously scandalous, and whose Conversion was undoubtedly the Effect of an extraordinary Grace. But let that be as it will, 'tis certain that an extraordinary Event is no Precedent in any Case whatsoever. For who would, for Example, be so mad as to throw himself into the Sea, because some few have in the like Danger been preserved from Drowning? or leap into the Fire, because some have escaped without being burnt? As therefore these extraordinary Deliverances are no Encouragement to any one to venture his Life upon the bare Hopes of such a Preservation, so neither ought the Example of the good Thief to embolden any one to hazard the eternal Life of his Soul, upon the Hopes that an extraordinary Grace will come in to his Assistance in his last Extremity.

Let us therefore all resolve to put in Practice this excellent Advice of the pious *Thomas à Kempis*; Do now, my dearest
E 2 Brother,

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Brother, do now whatever thou art able to do. Now, whilst thou art in perfect Health; now, whilst the Sun of Grace and Mercy shines yet bright upon thee, *for the Night cometh, when no Man can work,* John ix. 4. 'Tis well, if in our last Sickness we shall be able to maintain the Ground we got whilst we were in Health. 'Tis well, if we can then support ourselves under all the Trials incident to that Condition by the Stock of Virtue we have laid up beforehand. But let us never flatter ourselves with vain and groundless Hopes of doing great Matters, at a time when we are not only of ourselves the most unfit for it, but the Devil is most active to put all manner of Obstacles in our Way: For he knows we are then at our last Cast, upon which our eternal Happiness depends, and will therefore employ his utmost Skill and Malice to procure our Ruin.

Say not that Repentance never comes too late; for, tho' it be beyond all Question that true Repentance is never too late, yet a late Repentance, as *St. Austin* tells us, is seldom a true one. Because 'tis much to be suspected, that meer servile Fear, or Self-love, has a greater Share in the Motive of it than the Love of God. 'Tis to be feared, that such a Repentance is like the Trouble and Remorse of a Malefactor
led

led to Execution, who is sorry for having followed a Course of Life, which has brought him to an untimely and shameful End.

I heartily wish it may prove otherwise to those who will have the Misfortune to put it to the Trial ; and tho' in Reference to any particular Person, Charity obliges us to hope favourably, yet I cannot hinder my Fears from prevailing when there appears nothing but a meer Death-bed Repentance to ground my Hope upon. But when a Sinner repents, being yet in perfect Health, and applies himself seriously to the Methods proper for his Cure ; when it is evident, he resolves to quit Sin before the Power of sinning is just ready to leave him ; oh ! such a Repentance has a favourable Aspect, and yields a solid Ground to build our Hopes upon. Such a Repentance will be a Comfort to us at the Hour of Death ; as being the most assured Pledge we can have, that our heavenly Father regards us with an Eye of Mercy, and has a Blessing in Store for us.

The Sixth ENTERTAINMENT.

The Deceitfulness of a Death-bed Repentance.

God is not mocked, what a Man soweth that also shall he reap, Gal. vi. 6.

IN my last Discourse I represented at large the Difficulties that attend a Death-bed Conversion. But since the seeming Piety and Devotion of some Death-bed Penitents, who after a wicked Life have in Appearance died the *Death of the Just*, has given a kind of Credit and Reputation to the most dangerous Cheat the Devil can invent to ruin Souls, it will not be amiss to say something concerning those fair outward Appearances of Repentance, which many well-meaning Persons, out of an Abundance of mistaken Charity, are apt to judge too favourably of, and miscall *dying very happily*. They see a poor sick Man confessing and bewailing his Sins, imploring God's Mercy, and receiving the last Sacraments with the same sensible Marks of a truly contrite and humbled Heart, as the most fervent Christian could do ; and conclude immediately he has made
a happy

a happy End. Perhaps he has ; nay, it is beyond all Question, if his Repentance was hearty and sincere. But all is not Gold, that glitters. And there is a large Difference between the Appearance and Reality, the Ceremony and Substance of Repentance.

'Tis true, we are allowed to have favourable Thoughts even of the most profligate Sinners, as long as there is any reasonable Encouragement to ground our Hopes upon. But Charity has its Bounds, and is to be governed by Prudence as well as other Virtues. A meer Death-bed Conversion, tho' attended with Circumstances the most favourable in Appearance, ought always to be suspected, nay, marked as a dangerous Rock, to be avoided by all who have a serious Concern to secure their Soul's Salvation. And, tho' it may be allowed to afford some Degree of Hopes in favour of the Party concerned, it never ought to be magnified into an Encouragement for Sinners to hazard their eternal Interest upon so weak a Bottom. My present Design then is to lay before you the Uncertainty and Deceitfulness of those outward Marks of Devotion and Repentance, which are apt to mislead Men into an over-favourable Opinion of a Death-bed Conversion ; and this shall be the Subject of this Entertainment.

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I told you in my last Discourse, that a solid Conversion requires a true Change of the Heart, according to the Word of God, *Be converted to me in your whole Heart.* Now the Heart is said to be changed, when it changes its principal Love. As for Instance, when the Love of God becomes predominant, instead of the Love of the World and its sinful Pleasures, that Heart is truly changed, because its prevailing Love is not the same it was before.

Hence it follows, *first*, That the Heart alone is the Seat of Repentance, because it is the Seat of Love; and, *secondly*, That Sighs and Tears, Confession of Sins, Acts of Contrition formed by Word of Mouth, and verbal Protestations and Purposes of Amendment, are but the *Surface* and *Outside* of Repentance, and not the *Substance* of it: Because all these are consistent with a Heart wholly unchanged, and may have nothing but meer *Self-love*, *servile Fear*, or Motives *purely human*, for their Foundation; though when the Heart is truly changed, they are the usual Marks and Effects of it.

But, because Examples are often more convincing, and make a deeper Impression, than the most solid Reasons, let the Case of King *Antiochus*, as it is represented in the second Book of *Maccabees*, serve
for

for an Instance of this Truth. The exorbitant Pride and Avarice of this Prince had push'd him on to commit all manner of Injustice and Barbarities upon the *Jews*: But the divine Vengeance overtook him at last, as he was marching in all haste towards *Jerusalem*, with a full Intent to lay the City in Ashes, and massacre all its Inhabitants. For whilst he was thus breathing nothing but Fire and Desolation, he was suddenly seized with a violent Pain in his Bowels, which tortured him beyond Expression; and soon after he received a mortal Bruise with a Fall from his Chariot, which soon reduced him to the last Extremity.

And here his Eyes were opened, and becoming sensible that the Wrath of God was kindled against him for his enormous Crimes, and particularly the Outrages and Inhumanities he had committed in *Jerusalem*, he gave such Marks of a sincere Repentance, that had not the Word of God itself inform'd us of the Truth, we might have canonized him for an illustrious Penitent. For in the first Place he acknowledged the Hand of God in the Punishment inflicted on him. 2. He own'd the Justice of it. 3. He expressed an entire Submission to it. 4. He implored the divine Mercy with bitter Tears, and in

order to obtain it, he promised to atone for his past Crimes in such an exemplary Manner, as suffices to strike the Reader with Astonishment. Yet, notwithstanding all this pompous Shew and glittering Outside of Repentance, God, who is the Searcher of Hearts, saw no real Change in his. For had his Heart been truly changed, and converted to God, there is no doubt but he would have found the Mercy he prayed for; whereas the Word of God pronounces upon him in this terrible Manner; *This wicked Man prayed God, of whom he was not to obtain Mercy.*

Here is a frightful Example of a Death-bed Repentance; but the chief Use I intend it for is to convince you, that we never ought to reckon with any positive Assurance even upon the fairest outward Appearances of a Conversion, unless there be some other Reasons to judge by, that they are the Effects of a solid Change within: Because all outward Appearances are ambiguous and uncertain, and may be either unsound or sincere, according as the Principle or Motive from whence they proceed. A Robber, for Example, that is fallen into the Hands of Justice, may be sorry for the Robberies he has committed, because he sees himself upon the Point of suffering an ignominious Death. A Libertine

bertine may be very much troubled for the Life he has led, because he finds himself ruined by it both as to Health and Estate. So a Woman convicted of Dishonesty may be very sensibly afflicted, because she has rendered herself infamous by it. Now all these are *Penitents* indeed, but they are not *Gospel-Penitents*; because their Sorrow is grounded upon no better Motive than Interest or Self-love; and a *Heathen*, who has never heard of Christian Religion, will repent upon the same Score.

In like manner therefore a Sinner, who sees himself at Death's Door, and upon the Brink of everlasting Perdition, may, with the Fright of so dreadful a Prospect, be easily scared into a violent Disturbance and Anguish of Mind, which will outwardly produce the very same Effects as the most perfect Contrition. Because a violent Fear of any Evil near at hand cannot but affect the Party concern'd with a great Regret for having through his Folly drawn it upon himself. And this inward Regret, from whatever Cause it proceeds, will naturally force Sighs, and Tears, and Lamentations from him, and make him readily lay hold of all the obvious Expedients to prevent the horrible Mischief that threatens him. For what Wonder is it, that a Person just ready to sink should lay hold

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hold of any broken Plank to save himself.

But all this fair Outside of Repentance avails but little, when there is nothing but *servile Fear* at the Bottom of it. For *servile Fear* alone, tho' useful in the Beginning, can never work a thorough Change in a Sinner's Heart, nor by Consequence dispose him completely for his Reconciliation to God. There must be a Change of Love to qualify him for that Blessing, as is generally taught by spiritual Writers, and by none more clearly than St. *Austin*, who inculcates it on all Occasions, and has laid it down as a fundamental Maxim of Christian Morality, *that Love alone makes the Difference between the Children of God and the Children of the Devil.* The Meaning whereof is, that as the Love of Sin prevailing in the Heart makes us Children of the Devil, so the Love of Justice reigning in the Soul constitutes us Children of God. For which Reason St. *John* has also positively declared, that *whoever loves not, remains in Death*; and our Saviour being asked, *What is the first Commandment in the Law?* answered, *Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with thy whole Heart, &c.*

Hence it follows, *first*, That then alone a Sinner's Heart can be said to be truly
changed

changed or converted, when it passes from the Love of the one to the Love of the other; that is, when the Love of Sin is banished, and the Love of God enters into its Place. For these two Loves being diametrically opposite to one another in their very Natures, cannot subsist together, but must of course destroy each other.

It follows, *secondly*, That meer *servile Fear* is of itself insufficient to destroy the Love of Sin; because it implies no Hatred of it for its own Sake, and as it is an Offence to God, but merely in regard of the Punishment that attends it: Which made St. *Austin* say, that whoever leaves off sinning for the Fear of Hell-fire, *is not afraid to sin, but to burn*. Now this was properly the Case of *Antiochus*, who was sorry for his past Sins, not because God was offended by them, but because he found himself smart severely for them; and therefore was not worthy to obtain the Mercy he pray'd for, though he shewed all the outward Marks of a sincere Repentance. I heartily wish it may not be the Case of many Death bed Penitents. For, though every repenting Sinner, whatever his Condition be, is under some Degree of Uncertainty as to the Principle or Motive he acts upon, yet, doubtless, there are much better and solidier Grounds to hope

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favourably of the Repentance of one in perfect Health, than of him who has deferred it to the last Extremity. For of the former we may confidently pronounce there appears no positive Reason to doubt but his Conversion is solid and sincere; whereas of the latter we can only say, 'tis possible it may be so. And the Reason of this Difference is,

First, Because he that repents in time of perfect Health, renounces Sin when he has it in his Power to continue in it, and thereby shews that it is a free and voluntary Act, and not a forced Thing to which he is driven by meer Stress of Fear. Whereas we may reasonably suspect that one who has held on sinning as long as he could, and only discovers a Willingness to leave it, when he can sin no longer, renounces it, as I may say, not for Want of *Will* but *Power*.

Secondly, He that resolves upon a Change of Life, whilst he is in perfect Health, and has yet Time before him to do Penance for his Sins, shews a real and sincere Disposition to it; but he that drives it off to the very last, and only expresses a Desire to do Penance, when the Time of doing it is just expiring, gives Reason enough to suspect, that were his Life to be continued

nued to him, doing Penance for his Sins would be the least Part of his Business in it.

Thirdly, A Penitent in time of perfect Health has this great Advantage, that tho' his Repentance may, as it usually happens, be influenced at first by meer *servile Fear*, he has Leisure and Opportunity to pass forward, and work his Soul into a better Disposition, by duly applying himself to the Exercises proper to introduce the Love of God, and soften his Heart into a filial Compunction. And since God's Grace is never wanting to those that are not wanting to themselves, nor denies his Assistance where the natural Means provided by him are duly employed, a Penitent, that has laid hold of the Time and Opportunity granted him by God to put these Means in Practice to the best of his Power, has all the Reason in the World to hope, that the Work of his Conversion, tho' at first perhaps begun by Fear, is at last perfected by Love, and built upon a solid Foundation.

But the Case of a Death-bed Penitent is quite otherwise, as appears evidently from what I told you in my last Discourse: For since his Circumstances are such, as render the Use of the forementioned holy Exercises almost utterly impracticable to him, it is very difficult to conceive by what
means

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means (without an extraordinary Grace) the Love of God should get Entrance into his Heart, especially if we consider to what Degree it must needs be hardened against it by long Habits of Sin ; for there are two Things naturally requisite to make a rational Creature change his principal Love, *first*, A sufficient *Motive* to induce him to it ; and, *secondly*, A due Application of that Motive : For let a Motive be never so powerful in itself, unless it be duly applied, it can never affect the Heart, as every one may find by Experience.

Now give me leave to ask what Motive a Sinner can have to love God in his last Sickness more than he had all the Time he was in Health ? I am sensible indeed that all the Motives of *Fear* are then far more pressing upon him, than at any other time : For whether he reflects upon what is past, or considers what is to come, both the one and the other present Objects only proper to strike him with Terror. If he considers his Life past, he sees nothing but what looks ominous upon him, and threatens him with everlasting Punishment. If he looks before him, he sees himself upon the Brink of Eternity, and an offended Judge ready to mount the Tribunal to pronounce his Doom. Now all these Objects are very proper

proper indeed to create or increase Fear, but not to inspire Love.

You will say, perhaps, the Consideration of God's infinite Goodness, his boundless Mercies, the many particular Favours already received, and the like, are very strong and powerful Motives to love: I own they are so, but why then do not all Men love God with their whole Hearts, since all have these Motives to love him? The Reason is, because the very strongest Motives must be duly applied to work their desired Effect; and this can only be done by an attentive and reiterated Consideration of them: For how powerful soever the forementioned Motives are to enkindle the Love of God, it is not, alas, a few distracted Thoughts, or passing Glances upon them, will immediately inflame the Heart! they must be leisurely ruminated upon, and thoroughly digested, that so they may be made to sink deeply into the Mind, and then by a gradual Progress make their Way to the Heart: Because, unless the Ideas of Truths be first well imprinted on the Intellect, the Heart and Will can never be affected with them.

Now all this, humanly speaking, requires not only Time, but all the Strength, Composure and Presence of Thought a Person is capable of, even in the best State
of

of Health: Which being doubtless much more than can be naturally expected from one disabled with Sickness of Body, oppressed with Pains, and disturbed with excessive Fears, we may justly apprehend a Death-bed Penitent makes for the most part but a very lame Business of it, and seldom passes beyond meer *servile Fear*; so that however sincere his Repentance may appear outwardly, yet if the Root be defective, it is not that *worthy Fruit of Penance* the Gospel requires, but rather like that Fruit, which grows near the *dead Sea*, fair to the Eye, but unsound at Heart.

And here I cannot but very much blame the indiscreet Charity of those, who are ever ready to pronounce with as much Assurance in Favour of Death-bed Penitents, as if there were no ground for any Doubt of their Salvation. *Oh! (cries one) with what extraordinary Devotion did such a one receive the last Sacraments! He was a great Libertine indeed, but I doubt not but he has made a very happy End.* Now is not here as good Encouragement as can be given to Sinners to hazard all upon a Death-bed Repentance? Could the Devil himself speak more effectually to serve his own Purpose? For is not this the obvious Consequence to be drawn from it? *You see here is one, that has indulged himself in all unlawful*

lawful Pleasures to the very last, yet after all be made a very good End, and died very happily: And why then should we deny ourselves any Thing, or undergo the Hardship of doing Penance for our Sins, when Heaven may be purchased upon much easier Terms? These doubtless are the most obvious and natural Inferences, Men are apt to draw from the forementioned Elogiums of Death-bed Conversions.

I am sure at least the Fathers speak another Language, and are far from encouraging us to judge too much on the favourable Side in the Case of Death-bed Penitents; I shall omit *St. Chrysostom's* Words, which are very terrible indeed, and only quote *St. Austin*; “ If a Sinner (says he) in his
 “ last Sicknefs desires to be admitted to
 “ Penance, and is immediately reconciled
 “ and dies; I own indeed we deny him
 “ not what he asks, neither do we presume he dies well. If he himself be secured, I am not. For though we administer Penance to him, we can give him
 “ no Security. ’Tis true, I pronounce not
 “ that he will be damned; neither do I
 “ say that he will be saved. Wilt thou
 “ therefore be delivered from all Doubt,
 “ lay hold of what is certain, and depend
 “ not upon what is uncertain. Do Penance whilst thou art in Health. If
 “ thou

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“ thou dost so, I tell thee thou art secure,
 “ because thou hast done Penance, whilst
 “ thou hadst it in thy Power to sin. But
 “ if thou wilt do Penance, when thou
 “ canst sin no longer, thou leavest not off
 “ sinning, but thy Sins leave thee.”

These are St. *Austin's* Words ; and they suffice to convince us on the one hand, how far this holy Father was from being of the pretended charitable Disposition of those who are so ready to magnify Death-bed Conversions, and to let us know on the other, how mean an Opinion himself had of them. Truly we ought rather to speak with Fear and Trembling of those, who have been so unhappy as to run the Risque of so dangerous an After-game, than by indiscreet Elogiums to give a kind of Reputation to the Cheat, and help to inveigle others into the Snare.

But as we ought to be very wary and reserved in this Point, so we cannot speak with too much Assurance of the happy Circumstances of those, who have quitted their Sins, and done Penance in time of Health, whatever their Lives may have been before. And I heartily wish all may embrace this Course, which alone is safe after a sinful Life. For Heaven has but two Gates, *Innocence* and *Penance* ; the former is, I fear, already shut against most of us. All
 then

then we have to do is to secure the latter as soon as we can ; lest, if we drive it off too long, we may come to prosper no better than the *five foolish Virgins*, who beginning to trim their Lamps, when the Bridegroom's Door was shut, came too late for Admittance, and were repulsed with this Answer, *I know ye not.* And therefore our blessed Saviour concludes the Parable with this Admonition, *Be therefore watchful, for ye know not the Day nor Hour.*

'Tis certain no Man can tell how soon he may be called upon. He that is now in perfect Health, may be seized with a mortal Distemper before the End of this Month or Week. This will certainly happen to many in the World ; and we have no Security but it may happen to any of us. So that the only assured Means to prevent our being reduced to the Necessity of a Death-bed Repentance is, to let no time of Health slip from us, but lay immediately hold of it, and improve it to our best Advantage. And what Comfort will it be to us in our last Sicknes to be interiously convinced, that to the best of our Knowledge nothing has been wanting on our Side for the making of our Peace with God, and that the great Business, for which we came into this World, is then ready done to our
Hands,

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Hands, and wants nothing but the finishing Stroke to be given to it.

Oh! what a strengthening Cordial will this be against the usual Terrors of Death! With what Joy shall we then look back upon the good Works we have done, the Virtues we have practised, the Victories we have gained over our Passions, and the voluntary Mortifications we have undergone in Punishment of our Sins! But on the other hand, what Fear and Anguish, what Trouble, Darkness, and Perplexity of Thoughts will those be seized with, who in their last Extremity see themselves void of all solid Virtue, oppressed with a heavy Load of Sins, unprovided for Eternity, and under a pressing Necessity to undertake a Work of the greatest Importance imaginable, when dispirited with Weakness, Pains, and Fears, and streighten'd for Time, they neither have the Heart to set about it, nor are in any tolerable Condition to go thorough with it! If we could but see what passes in the Soul of a Wretch in this unhappy Condition, it would certainly terrify us from ever hazarding to fall into it; and the Sight of a Criminal upon the Rack would be a Spectacle of less Horror to us.

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The Seventh ENTERTAINMENT.

X OF JUDGMENT.

The Importance of the Cause to be tried at the great Tribunal.

We must all appear before the Judgment-Seat of Christ, 2 Cor. v. 10.

OF all the Truths of Christian Religion, none is more terrifying than that which is laid before us in these Words of St. Paul. Holy Job could never think of it without Trembling, *What shall I do, says he, when the Lord shall come to judge? Or when he shall demand an Account of me, what shall I answer for myself?* St. Jerome was no less sensibly affected with it, as himself relates; nor could he ever think of it, but he found himself seiz'd with Terror, and the Impression sunk so deep, that no Business could remove it from his Thoughts; for whatever he was doing, he imagined he heard the last Trumpet sounding in his Ears, *Rise ye Dead, and come to Judgment.* Many other Saints have lived under the same continual Apprehensions of it; particular-
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ly St. *Arsenius*, who in his last Sickness declared to those that were about him, that since his Retirement into the Desert, he had not passed one Day without Fear.

And truly 'tis no Wonder that Men, who gave themselves Leisure to think, and look'd farther than the present World, should be terrify'd with the Prospect of a Day which was to decide their eternal Lot: A Day, attended with all the Circumstances proper to strike Terror into any Heart that will but consider them with due Attention: For the Saints were not content to allow them a general View, or passing Glance; but, in order to imprint the Ideas of them deeply on their Minds, they ruminated distinctly and leisurely upon every Circumstance relating to it. They consider'd the infinite *Holiness, Wisdom, Power, and Majesty* of the Judge, before whom they were to appear. They consider'd the *Exactness* of the Scrutiny to be made of every Thought, Word, and Action of their whole Lives; the large Difference between God's Judgments, and those of Men, the *weighty Importance of the Cause*, which when once decided would admit of no Appeal; and finally, the *Severity and Rigour of the Law*, by which it was to be tried.

By these Considerations often repeated, and thoroughly digested, they kept themselves

selves in the Disposition prescribed by St. *Paul of working their Salvation in Fear and Trembling.* And if all Christians would but follow their Method in this one Point, the Face of Christendom would soon be changed, and Men would not let loose the Reins to all sinful Liberties, as if no Account were to be given hereafter. This certainly would be the Fruit of a frequent and serious Consideration of the severe Judgment which every Man must undergo immediately after his Death. Since therefore I have now already gone through all the principal Considerations relating to *Death*, the Order of my Subject now calls upon me to speak of this *Judgment*; which containing several Truths of great Concern, I will now begin with the weighty Importance of the Cause that is to be decided in it, which shall be the whole Subject of this Entertainment.

When a Criminal under Confinement expects to be tried for his Life, if his Case admits of any Hope, he fails not to use all Endeavours possible to prepare himself so, that Sentence of Death may not be pronounced upon him: He makes all the Interest he can, consults the ablest Lawyers, studies all his Answers to the Indictment that will be brought against him, and, in a

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word, spares no Pains or Cost to make a good Defence.

Now if any one should ask a Person under these Circumstances, what Reason he has to be thus concern'd? why he gives himself so much Trouble? or to what Purpose he throws away so much Money? why he will not rather set his Heart at rest, and study to divert himself? If any one, I say, should put these Questions to him, his Answer would doubtless be, that he has Reason enough to be concern'd, and not sit idle, when his Life is at stake. And without all Dispute the Answer would be too rational and satisfactory to leave Room for any further Reply.

Yet after all, what is this precious Treasure call'd *Life*, on which Men set so high a Value, and seek to preserve at any Rate? Holy *Job* gives this Account of it: *Man born of a Woman lives a short Time, and is fill'd with many Miseries. He comes forth as a Flower, and is bruised into Dust. He flies away as a Shadow, and never remains in the same State.* And St *James*, to express the Shortness of it, calls it a *Vapour*, that appears for a little Time, and then vanishes away.

This is the valuable Treasure we are so fond of, and which Nature has so strong an

an Inclination to preserve, and Fear to lose, that no Business relating to this World is of equal Moment with that wherein Life is concern'd. And hence it is that the Case of a poor Criminal expecting to be brought to his Trial, to receive his final Doom, is by all esteem'd a Concern of so high a Nature, that nothing can be done too much to prevent a Miscarriage; and the Terror of it affects not only the Party concern'd, I mean the Criminal himself, but all that have any Tie, whether of Blood or Friendship with him, are interested, and solicitous for his Deliverance from the Danger that threatens him.

Now if a Cause of Life and Death in this World be justly esteem'd a Business of so great a Concern, tho' all that can be lost upon the Issue of it be no more than a short and miserable Life, who can find Words to express, or Ideas to conceive the weighty Importance of a Cause, wherein the Soul's eternal and unchangeable Doom is to be determined. For the Thing, that is at stake in this Trial, is not, alas! the small Remainder of a few Months or Years, the poor Comfort of a perishable Life, or the uncertain Enjoyment of a temporal Estate, but the Interest and final Sentence of Eternity. *Heaven and Hell* are the Reward

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and Punishment disputed in it; that is, Life and Death without End, Joys and Torments without Measure. In a word, all that can be hoped for on the one hand, and all that can be fear'd on the other, depends upon the happy or unhappy Issue of it. Oh! what a weighty Concern is this! How inconsiderable and trivial are all things of this World, if put in Balance with it!

To give you a clear Idea of this Truth, I need but compare the *Goods* and *Evils* of this Life with the *Joys* and *Torments* of the Life to come, and shew the infinite Disproportion there is between them. For in this Life every Thing is *mix'd*, the Enjoyments as well as Sufferings of this World have their Allays, and nothing is good or bad in Extreme.

First, It's Joys are evidently of this Nature, since we find that even those, who are esteem'd most happy, are seldom or never content. When they have no real Evils to trouble them, imaginary ones are call'd in to supply the Place. Something is ever wanting, if not to reasonable Desires, at least to satisfy Extravagance or Humour. They grow weary of what they have, and are uneasy for what they have not. Those Goods, from which Men measure their very *worldly* Happiness, want not their Evils;
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their *Wealth* is encumber'd with Solicitudes and Fears ; their *Honours* expose them to Envy and Censure ; and their *Pleasures* are either too short or too long, and so cause either Disappointment or Loathing. But let them be never so artfully contrived to prevent both the one and the other, the very Thought that they must all end in Death destroys a Part of their Satisfaction, and suffices alone to cast a Damp upon their most refined and heighten'd Joys.

This is the general Condition of the *Goods* of this Life, and it's *Evils* are of the same *mix'd* Nature, and have all their peculiar Abatements. For if *Pain* be the Evil Men are afflicted with, it is either moderate or violent. If moderate, it is tolerable, and there's no great Reason to complain. If violent, it cannot last long. Besides, a good Conscience, and the Hopes of an eternal Repose, sweetens the one as well as the other, and is as a continual Feast. So that whilst the Body is in Pain, the Mind may be at Ease, and then the Comfort is greater than the Affliction.

But if *Disgrace* be the Evil that troubles them, they either deserve it or not. If not, they suffer innocently, the Consciousness whereof is a most solid Comfort. But if they have brought it upon them-

selves by any Crime, or culpable Indiscretion, they may draw a substantial Good from the Evil they suffer, by submitting humbly to it; and so make their Disgrace with Men become a Step to raise them in the Favour and Esteem of God.

Lastly, If *Poverty* be their Cross, they have at least the Advantage of being free from the Snares and Temptations of Riches; and the Advantage is very considerable, if rightly valued. Besides, if their Circumstances be narrow, 'tis but contracting their Desires within the same Bounds, and a reasonable Content may be found in any State. 'Tis true, they have not the Pleasures and Conveniences which the Rich enjoy, but they are also without the Dangers to which their Enjoyments expose them: They are likewise without the Uneasiness of Mind, which all conscientious rich Men must needs be under, in regard of the Account they must give of their Stewardship to God. For they are but in Effect his Stewards, and will be responsible to him for all Abuses committed in their Stewardship. Add to this, that the Poor are but by God's Appointment in the very same Condition which many Thousands have made their voluntary Choice, nay was chosen by Christ himself, and pronounced by him

him a *blessed State*. And is not this a solid Comfort? But tho' all other Comforts should be wanting, the Consideration, that Death will infallibly put an End to all their Sufferings in this World, is one at least that can never fail.

Thus then we see that neither the *Goods* nor *Evils* of this Life are without Mixtures, it's sweetest Joys are sprinkled with Bitterness, and it's bitterest Sorrows have an Allay of Comfort either in Present or Reverſion. But in the World to come Matters are not ſo. Every Thing there is pure and unmix'd. All Sorrow is baniſh'd from Heaven, and in Hell there is no Comfort. So that the future State of the Soul being once fix'd admits of no Mean; but is either infinitely miſerable, or infinitely happy. Becauſe God being an infinite Good, the Poſſeſſion of him cannot but be an infinite Bleſſing, and the Loſs of him an infinite Evil. And hence there is no *Diſcontent* in Heaven, becauſe the bleſſed Souls enjoy whatever they can wiſh or deſire: No *Diſappointment*, becauſe all their Hopes are fully ſatiſfied: No *Wearineſs* or *Loathing*, becauſe the Object that renders them happy, always is and always appears the ſame. Finally, no *Fear*, becauſe they know their State to be permanent and ever-
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lasting ; they possess inestimable *Riches*, without Solicitude or Trouble ; they are crown'd with *Honour* and *Glory*, without Jealousy or Envy ; and are incessantly fill'd with incomprehensible *Delights* and *Pleasures*, without Satiety.

But as the heavenly Beatitude is a State made up of all Goods every Way perfect and complete, so *Damnation*, which is the State diametrically opposite to it, is a most frightful Aggregation of all imaginable **Evils** without any Mixture of Good. For in Hell the Soul is deprived of every Thing she loves or desires, and condemn'd to every Thing she abhors or fears. She has a violent Inclination in her Nature to be happy, and she knows herself eternally separated from every Thing that is capable of contributing to it. She craves after Wealth and Plenty, and she sees herself stripp'd naked of every Thing, and sunk into the lowest Degree of Misery and Want. She loves Honour and Esteem, and she is condemn'd to everlasting Confusion and Disgrace. In a word, Happiness and Content, Ease and Pleasures, are the Things she most earnestly thirsts after, and she is doom'd to Torments, without any Glimpse or Shadow of Comfort: Torments,
never

never to be intermitted, never to be abated, never to end.

Now from this terrible Difference between the Condition of Things temporal and eternal, and the infinite Greatness both of the Rewards and Punishments of the other World, we may form some Idea of the weighty Importance of the Cause that is to be decided at the great Tribunal. For it follows clearly from them that the Importance of it surpasses all Concerns even of the highest Nature in this World, as much as Heaven is above Earth, as much as Eternity exceeds a short Term of Time, or the infinite Being of God surpasses all limited and created Beings. And therefore since these have no Manner of Proportion, 'tis plain that all earthly Concerns, even those that are attended with the most weighty Consequences, are no more than childish Toys and Trifles, in Comparison with the great Business that is to be decided hereafter. For whereas all the Business of this Life is about Things that are neither permanent nor solid in their Nature, as I have shewn, we may truly say they are scarce worth our being solicitous about them. But the Goods and Evils of the other World being infinite and everlasting, the Consequence of our succeeding or miscarrying

in a Cause, which is to give the final Determination to our future State, comprehends all whatever a rational and immortal Soul can either love or hate, hope or fear, wish or abhor.

And therefore at whatever Moment our Souls are summon'd to appear before the Tribunal of Christ, it will then be irrevocably determined, whether we are to be the happiest or most unfortunate Creatures that God can make us : Whether Heaven with all it's infinite Joys, or Hell with all its inconceivable Torments, whether Delights pure and unmix'd, or Evils without any Shadow of Comfort, are to be our everlasting Portion. If we be found free from Guilt, Life without End, Joys without Sorrow, Fulness without Satiety, incorruptible Riches, immortal Honours, and a Crown of Glory that will never fade, will be our Reward. But if we be found guilty of any mortal Sin deliberately committed, and not wash'd off by true Repentance, alas! poor Wretches, we are then immediately sentenced to be for ever banish'd from the Sight of God, doom'd to unquenchable Flames, and condemn'd to all that is dreadful without any Hopes of ever enjoying one Moment of Ease, Relief, Intermission or Abatement of our Pains. O dreadful Judgment,

ment, on which the Soul's eternal and unchangeable Lot depends! Dreadful Judgment, after which (allowing only for the temporal Punishment of pious Souls not fully purified) there is no Mean to be found, but every thing is infinite, incomprehensible, eternal.

For this Reason our Saviour exhorts us *not to fear those who can kill the Body, but only him, who when the Body is destroyed, can cast the Soul into Hell-fire.* For this Reason he tells us, *that it profits a Man nothing to gain the whole World, if he loses his Soul.* Finally, for this Reason he commands us to sacrifice an *Eye, Hand, or Foot*, or whatever is dearest and most precious to us in this Life, rather than be hereafter condemned to everlasting Flames. And it was undoubtedly the Consideration of these terrifying Truths which made St. *Austin* pray to God to be burnt, tortured, or cut to Pieces here, so he might but be spared hereafter. 'Twas this made the holy Martyrs prefer burning Gridirons, Gibbets, Rods, and Axes, before the Pleasures of this Life. And the same Motive induced so many holy Men and Women to renounce all Satisfactions of Nature, and fly to Caves and Desarts, to shelter themselves against the Terrors and irreparable Misfortunes of the Day of Wrath.

And

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And truly, what Wonder is it they should renounce Trifles, to secure eternal and substantial Goods? Or that they should choose to undergo some temporal Pains and Inconveniencies, rather than expose themselves to eternal Miseries and Torments? For this is no more than acting according to the Dictates of Reason, which naturally prompt us to give the Preference to the greater Good, and of two Evils to choose the lesser. But what justly challenges our greatest Surprise and Amazement is, that even those, who would not enjoy one Moment's Rest, if either Life or Estate were in danger, should be charmed into a dead Sleep, and live on with all the Unconcern imaginable, whilst Heaven and Eternity are at stake, and in manifest danger of being irreparably lost. This is so monstrous an Infatuation, that one would think it were inconsistent either with Faith or Reason; and yet how many Christians are guilty of it? How many are there that live as if there either were no Day of Reckoning to come, or the Interest depending on it were beneath their Concern?

Preserve us, O God, from this fatal Blindness. Pierce our Hearts with the Terrors of thy Judgments, and give us so deep a Sense of the weighty Importance

tance of securing our eternal Happiness, that nothing may ever divert us from it.

The Eighth ENTERTAINMENT.

The Rigour of the Law by which we are to be judged.

The Word that I have spoken, the same shall judge him in the last Day, John xii. 48.

THESE Words of Christ mark out clearly to us the *Law* by which we are to be judged; to wit, the *evangelical Law* contained in the four Gospels, and other Tracts of the New Testament. It therefore concerns us all to be in some Measure informed of the Nature of this Law: For our *All* depends upon it; our eternal Lot will be decided by it, and if it finds us guilty, we are lost for ever. My present Design then is to explain to you this important Circumstance both of the *first* and *last Judgment*, viz. the Rigour of the Law by which we are to be judged. And this shall be the whole Subject of this Entertainment.

'Tis related in the tenth Chapter of St. *Luke*, that our Saviour, being consulted by a *Jewish Doctor* concerning the Means necessary to Salvation, instead of satisfying him with a direct Answer, referred him to the Law. *In lege quid scriptum est? quomodo legis?* What is written in the Law? how dost thou read? Giving him thereby to understand, that to save his Soul, he only needed to consult the Law of God, and do according as it should direct him.

Now as the Laws of civil Governments serve to a double Purpose, *viz.* to direct and punish; to regulate the Duties of civil Life, and convict the Offenders against them, so is it in the spiritual Kingdom of Christ. God has made us an ample Provision of Laws, some of which are set down in the moral Tracts of the Old Testament, and summed up in the two Tables of the Decalogue. But these being not only reinforced but explained by *Christ*, we may truly say that the Gospels, which deliver his sacred Doctrine in his own Words, and the other Parts of the New Testament, which are but Comments upon them, contain the whole Body of the *Christian Law*; that is, of all the *Precepts, Rules, and Maxims*, upon which a Christian is bound to model his Life.

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Whence it follows, that as a Christian is bound to live according to the Direction of this Law, so will he be hereafter judged, and either saved or condemned by it. The Gospel is his Guide, and he must follow it, if he will attain to Life everlasting. The Gospel is his Rule, and if he swerves from it, he must expect to undergo the Severity of it. In a word, the Gospel is the Law he professes, and he must stand or fall by it at the Day of Judgment. So that this Question, *What is written in the Law? how dost thou read?* proposed by Christ to the Jewish Doctor, will then be pressed home to every Christian. All our Thoughts, Words, and Deeds, will be brought to this Test, and every Article of the Indictment against us examined by it. Whatever is found conformable to this Law, will be approved and rewarded; and whatever appears contrary to it, will be condemned and punished. In fine, this Sentence of our Saviour to the Jews, *The Word that I have spoken, the same shall judge him in the last Day*, will be fully made good in Relation to every one of us. And happy he, who now lives so up to it as to be hereafter able to stand the Trial of it.

It being therefore certain that the Gospel is the Law which is to judge us, let

us now inquire into the Nature of it, and see whether it will in any likelihood prove favourable to our Cause, or whether it will not rather increase the Terror of the last Day. Let any one but apply himself to an attentive Consideration of the holy Doctrine it contains, and if he be not wholly insensible, he will find himself seized with Fear, when he reflects, that at the opening of the Books of Conscience, all the Particulars of his Life enter'd into those sacred Registers will be compared with it, and his eternal Doom determined by it. For I observe three Things in it very terrifying and full of Rigour. *First*, We shall be accountable to it for the *Secrets* of our *Hearts*, as well as *outward Works*. *Secondly*, It will have no Regard to the *corrupt Customs* and *Maxims* of this World. And, *Thirdly*, The Duties, of which it will require an Account, are mostly such as our corrupt Nature has the greatest Repugnance to. From these three Heads we may easily gather, how little favourable this Law is like to prove to the important Cause that is to be decided by it. I shall make a few Remarks upon each.

First then, we shall stand accountable to it for the *Secrets* of our *Hearts* as well as *outward Works*. And whereas human Laws restrain only the *Hand* and *Tongue*,
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but are forced to leave Men the Freedom of their Thoughts, the Gospel Law will on the contrary take as strict a Cognizance of what we have *thought*, as of what we have said or done. Our *Desires* will be as nicely looked into as our Deeds. Our very *Intentions* will be weighed in the Balance of the Sanctuary, and the Motives upon which we have acted, as severely examined as the Actions themselves. So that what many times is found in Substance, and seemingly above all Exception, will, in this Court of Judicature, be found vitiated in its Principle or Root: Here all the subtle Insinuations of *Pride*, and secret Contrivances of *Self-love*, will be narrowly searched into, and pronounced upon. Here a strict Inquiry will be made of, how much has been done merely for Interest, how much to gratify some particular Humour, or to gain Esteem and Applause. And whatever shall be found to have been influenced by these or other such human Respects, though it was highly valued and admired in this World, will be disapproved and censured by the Law that is to judge us.

But of all the wicked Stratagems of corrupt Nature, none will be more severely judged than the *Hypocrisy* of those who, under the Mask of Zeal for Religion, have covered the blackest Designs of ruining
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the Reputation of their real or reputed Enemies, by malicious Insinuations, or accusing them of Crimes whereof they were wholly innocent. And I shall only add, that whoever finds his Conscience charged with any Part of this Unchristian Practice, though his Intention was never so seemingly pious (for a good Intention can never justify a bad Deed) cannot hope for Mercy at the Day of Judgment, without first making a Reparation answerable to the Injustice he has committed.

Secondly, This Law will have no Regard to the usual Plea of this World from *Custom* or *Example*; I mean, in favour of such Practices as interfere with or incroach upon any Branch of the Doctrine of the Gospel. For truly, if Custom should hereafter be allowed to put in its Plea, and influence the Decision of our Cause, I should be obliged to own, that many of those, who in all likelihood will make but a very unfortunate Business of it, would have as fair a Prospect of succeeding as they could wish, and Doomsday would not be so frightful by many Degrees as it is every where represented. For, excepting only enormous Crimes, what would not Custom apologize for? All modish Vices would find shelter under its Protection. *Pride, Idleness, Intemperance, Immodesty in dressing,*

ing, Revenge, and Prodigality, would not want an Advocate to plead their Cause; and, in a word, all fashionable Extravagances would have good Warrant to secure them.

But, alas! this Plea will be out of doors at the great Day of Assizes. It carries indeed a great Sway now, and has a Power which few are able to resist. But it ends with this World: nor will its Laws be in the least consulted by the supreme Arbiter of Life and Death. So that, whoever has nothing but *Custom* or *Example* to alledge for his Justification, will make but a very weak Defence.

Hence, in the World to come, it will be to very little Purpose to say, *I have done as others did before me. I followed the common Practice. I thought it necessary to conform myself to Custom.* For though this be a plausible Cover now, and carries a fair Shew of Reason for any Thing that is not grossly scandalous, it will not satisfy hereafter; and the general Answer to all these specious Pretences will be, *What is writ in the Law? how dost thou read?* that is, *have thy Actions been conformable to the Gospel?* This, I say, will be the general Answer to all the pretended Reasons for Custom and Compliance, where-with corrupt Nature seeks now to put a Gloss upon the Works of Self-love and
Pride.

Pride. For when God comes to judge, this Varnish will be taken off, and every Thing be made to appear in its proper Colours. The *evangelical Law* will then have its full Course, in spite of all the contrary Customs of the World; and nothing will find Approbation, but what can stand the Trial of it.

Nay, *Custom*, the great Law-maker of this World, will be so far from helping us out at the Day of Judgment, that our having conformed to it, in Contradiction to the Gospel, will be a considerable Article against us; as is evident both from the many *Woes* pronounced by Christ against the *World*, and the repeated Prohibitions recorded in Holy Writ against conforming to it. *Be not conform'd to this World*, says St. Paul. And *whoever*, says St. James, *will be a Friend of this World, becomes an Enemy of God.*

Oh! how many worldly Christians, who have nothing but Custom to plead for them, will be condemned by this very Maxim of the *evangelical Law*! How will they stand confounded, when they find all their fine Reasons of pretended Decency and Compliance rejected as frivolous, and no other Plea admitted, but what is grounded upon the Conformity of their Actions to the Law they swore to
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at the Font! And yet this will certainly be the unhappy Case of all such Lovers and Admirers of the World, as had more Regard to its Approbation and Esteem, than to what the Law of God demanded of them.

Thirdly, The Duties, of which it will demand an Account, are mostly such as corrupt Nature has the greatest Repugnance to. This will appear beyond all Dispute, if we but reflect, that it will hereafter demand an Account of what it now *commands* and *forbids*; and pronounce upon us according as we have been exact or deficient in performing the one and avoiding the other. Now whoever will but seriously apply himself to read and study the evangelical Law with an unbiassed Judgment, and sincere Desire to discover the true Spirit and Meaning of it, will find that the greatest Part of its Precepts and Maxims either oblige us to Things from which our Nature is very averse, or prohibits Things to which it is most strongly inclined. For what is it our Nature chiefly *loves* or *hates*? It loves *Honour* and *Esteem*, *Wealth* and *Pomp*, *Ease*, *Liberty*, and *Pleasures*; and, by Consequence, it regards *Poverty*, *Contempt*, *Restraint*, and *Suffering*, as its greatest Grievances. Now the Gospel not only cries down all the forementioned Ob-
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jects of our Inclinations, and preaches up the Objects of our Aversions, but obliges all its Disciples to such Duties, as directly thwart Nature both in the one and the other.

As for Instance, what can mortify Nature more in its Inclination to *Honour* and *Esteem*, than to be bound to imitate the Humility of the Cross? to bear the Confusion of confessing our most hidden Sins? to humble ourselves before God and Man? to love and do good to them that despise, traduce, and affront us? Yet all these Duties are required of us by the Law that is to judge us.

Secondly, What can thwart our Nature more in its Love of *Wealth* and *Pomp*, than to be bound not to set our Hearts and Affections upon them, and be in a readiness to sacrifice all we enjoy in this World rather than betray our Duty, or offend God mortally? Yet this we are obliged to by the Law that is to judge us.

Thirdly, What can cross Nature more in its Love of *Liberty* and *Ease*, than to be under an Obligation of improving the Talents we have received? Of being watchful over our Senses? of bridling the Tongue, avoiding the Occasions of Sin, and being faithful in acquitting ourselves of all the Duties of our respective Stations and Callings? Yet we are charged with
all

all these Obligations by the Law that is to judge us.

Fourthly and lastly, What greater Contradiction can there be to our natural Propensity to *Pleasure*, than *striving to enter through the narrow Gate; gaining the Kingdom of Heaven by violence; doing worthy Fruits of Penance; hating and denying ourselves; mortifying the Deeds of the Flesh by the Spirit; crucifying the Flesh with all its Affections and Lusts; abstaining from all Things to gain the Crown;* and, in a word, imitating the serious, laborious, and suffering Life of our heavenly Pattern *Jesus Christ*? Yet all these Duties are in a certain Degree required of us by the Law that is to judge us. So that nothing is plainer, than that this Law obliges us to many Duties most disrelishing to Nature, and directly opposite to its strongest Inclinations. And, by consequence, as it now requires them of us, so shall we be hereafter accountable to it for the Performance.

The holy Fathers were undoubtedly of this Opinion: For they used it for the most Part as an Argument to convince Idolaters, that the planting of the Christian Faith was the Work of a Divine and supernatural Power; and that nothing but the Hand of God could ever have carried it
on,

on, and brought it to Perfection. Now if the Doctrine of the Gospel suited with the Humour of the World, or were agreeable to Flesh and Blood, the Argument had been wholly frivolous; for what need of the Hand of God to bring Men over to a Religion that flattered their Inclinations? What need of a divine and supernatural Power to carry on an Undertaking that should meet no Opposition in Men's Nature to hinder its Success? But it being supposed that the Christian Doctrine runs counter in many Things both to the received Maxims of the World, and the most pressing Inclinations of Flesh and Blood, the Argument was unanswerable; and the holy Fathers using it against the Pagans for that Purpose, is an evident Proof, that this was their Idea of it.

Neither were the Fathers alone of this Persuasion; but all the Saints, whom the Church honours as such, and recommends to our Imitation, have ever agreed with them in their Ideas of the Rigour of the Gospel; as the Method of their Lives, which they formed upon it, sufficiently testifies. For was it not their daily and only Business to study to deny and mortify themselves? Consider but the Particulars of their Lives, and you will find it so. For they renounced whatever
Nature

Nature delights in, and made choice of what it has an Aversion to. They spent their Days in the most laborious Practices of Penance. They brought their Bodies under Subjection, and subdued their rebellious Passions by praying, watching, fasting, and other Austerities. In a word, they engaged themselves in a continual War against all the Pleasures, Liberties, and Satisfaction of this World.

Now what induced the Saints, who wore the same Flesh and Blood, and were as sensible both of Pleasure and Pain as the rest of their Fellow-mortals, what induced them, I say, to undertake a course of Life so opposite to all the Inclinations of Nature? 'Twas undoubtedly their Persuasion, that whatever they did in this kind was but conformable to the Law, whereof they professed themselves Disciples, and to which they were to be accountable hereafter. For without this Persuasion it had certainly been impossible, that Men in their Senses, and naturally as great Lovers of themselves as the rest of Mankind, should ever have made so strange a Choice, as to prefer Sufferings and Self-denials to the Pleasures and Conveniencies of Life; and therefore we must either charge the Saints with Folly and Delusion; or conclude the evangelical Law, from
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which they took their Measures, is far more severe in its Precepts and Maxims, than the World seems willing to own: Not that it follows hence, that the Gospel obliges all Christians to live up to the Austerities practised by the Saints; but it is above all Question, that it obliges them to something that bears a Resemblance with it; and that a Life, which is a flat Contradiction to theirs, and the very Reverse of it, neither has the Gospel for it's Pattern, nor will hereafter be able to stand the Trial of it.

Thus I have laid before you both the weighty Importance of the Cause that is to be tried before the great Tribunal, and the Severity of the Law by which it is to be tried: I leave you now to judge, whether we can pretend to act rationally, if we make it not our most serious Endeavour to secure a Point of such infinite Importance on the one hand, and liable to so great a Hazard on the other; or whether we ought not to be at least as active, careful, and solicitous in managing this Concern, as we should be in case something of very great Importance relating to this World were at stake.

Let us then suppose we were now fallen into the Hands of Justice, kept under close Confinement, and expecting daily to be

be tried for our Lives; what should we do in this Case? what Measures would be taken? would we sit down with our Arms across, or entertain ourselves with some frivolous Amusement till we were summon'd to the Bar? should we not rather look about us in Time, and busy ourselves in preparing for our Trial, by making Friends, by consulting some skilful Lawyer, by studying our Defence, and Answers to the Evidence that would appear against us? Especially if we were persuaded, that by taking these Precautions we might secure our Lives and Fortunes, and by neglecting them we should certainly lose both the one and the other.

Now tho' the Case supposed be but a Shadow of the real one, which regards the Business of the Life to come, yet the Measures, we should resolve upon in the one, may be some Direction as to what we ought to do in the other. Let us then consider, that we must all one Day appear before the *Tribunal of Christ*, to receive Sentence of eternal Life or Death. This World is our Prison, whence we must one Day go forth in order to our Trial in the next. We know not how soon we may be call'd upon. All we are sure of is, that we must come to it sooner or later. However, during our Confinement here below,

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we may order Matters so, that the Trial, instead of being a Day of Terror and Confusion, may be a Day of Joy and Honour to us. And how must this be done? by only taking proportionably the same Measures, as we would in the Case supposed.

Let us then do as much to save our Souls, as we would to save our Lives, and all will go well. Let us not waste our Time in idle or sinful Amusements, but make it our principal Business from henceforward to prepare for our Trial, by *making Friends*, by advising with some *skilful Lawyer*, and *studying our Answers* to the Accusations we already know will be brought against us.

The principal Person, with whom we must endeavour to make an Interest, is our *Advocate* and *Mediator Jesus Christ*. Let us bewail our Sins daily before him, with an humble and sincere Repentance. Let us now make him our Pattern, and he will not fail to be our Friend, even when he comes to be our Judge.

2dly, We must make an Interest with the *Saints*, and particularly with the *Blessed Virgin*, by a devout Observance of their Feasts, by imitating their Virtues, and often imploring their Intercession. And, 3dly, according to our Saviour's Advice, we must *make to ourselves Friends of the Mammon of Injustice*,
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that is, gain the *Poor* over to our side, and purchase their Prayers by frequent Alms. Let us but see the Poor as we would our Lawyers, in case we had a considerable Law-suit depending, and it will go a great way towards the gaining our Cause. Their Prayers have a great Power without Judge, because they are his Representatives here upon Earth, and what is done to them for Christ his Sake will be accepted, as if it had been done to *Christ* himself.

We must also consult from Time to Time some *skilful Lawyer*, I mean, some prudent Director, whose Advice we may depend upon. But then we must take care to state our Case fairly to him. For if we use Double-dealing, or conceal any thing of Moment from him, tho' he were an Angel, we should perish under his Hands.

Lastly, We must prepare our Answers to the Accusations we already know will be brought against us. Now if we can but make it appear, that we have done *worthy Fruits of Penance*, this will be an unexceptionable Answer to all Accusations of what kind soever. Because all *Penitent Sinners*, that is, all Sinners, tho' never so enormous, if they do worthy Fruits of Penance to expiate their Sins past, and begin a new Course of Life, and persevere in it, have

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God's own infallible Promise of Mercy deliver'd in these express Terms; *When the wicked Man turns away from the Wickedness he has committed, and does Judgment and Justice, he shall certainly live, and he shall not die.*

The Ninth ENTERTAINMENT.

The infinite Knowledge of the Judge.

There is nothing cover'd that shall not be reveal'd, nor hid, that shall not be known.
Matt. x. 26.

IN the Introduction to my first Discourse upon *Judgment*, I made a short Enumeration of the most weighty Circumstances relating to it, and have already enlarged upon two of them, *viz.* the Importance of the Cause that is to be decided in it, and the Rigour of the *Law* by which it is to be tried. It remains now to say something concerning the Character of the Judge before whom we are to appear. You all know the Person is *Jesus Christ*, true God and true Man; and therefore infinite in all the Attributes belonging

belonging to the divine Nature ; as *Power, Knowledge, Goodness, Justice, and Mercy.* Now if I were to consider him in Quality of *Redeemer* of Mankind, or as he is the *Advocate* of Sinners; his *infinite Mercies* would be a proper Subject for me to dwell upon : But since I am now to speak of him only as *Judge*, you will not be surprised to hear me deliver such Truths, as are more apt to cause Terror than Comfort.

However, it is a certain Truth, that the whole Course of this Life is a Time of *Mercy*, and the greatest Sinners are capable of receiving the Benefit of it to the very last Gasp : But after that, we enter into another World, where *Justice* takes place, and *every one will receive*, as St. Paul assures us, precisely according to his Works : I shall therefore consider three Things in the Judge before whom we are to appear ; 1. His *infinite Knowledge*, which nothing can escape ; 2. His being the very Person, whom we offend by every Sin we commit ; and, 3. His being *infinitely just*. I shall reserve the two latter Considerations for my next Discourse, and at present speak only of his *infinite Knowledge*, which therefore shall be the whole Subject of this Entertainment.

A Criminal, who is to be tried for his Life, is apt to comfort himself in some
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measure

measure with the flattering Hopes, that either the Indictment will not be fully proved against him, or that the Witnesses may be bought off, or that the Judge, whom he has never personally offended, may be moved to Compassion, and not proceed against him according to the utmost Rigour of the Law. But a Criminal, who is to have *Christ* for his Judge, cannot comfort himself with any of these flattering Thoughts. And nothing but a Conscience free from mortal Sin can hinder Sentence of eternal Death from passing upon him.

First then all Hope of having any Thing conceal'd or palliated is utterly excluded by the *infinite Wisdom* and *Knowledge* of the divine Person who is to be our Judge: For as nothing can resist an *infinite Power*, so nothing can escape the Penetration of an *infinite Knowledge*; which tho' it be in itself above our Comprehension, it is however necessary to form the best Idea of it we can, since without it we cannot rightly apprehend how terrible a Thing it is for a Criminal to appear before, and have his eternal Lot decided by a Judge of that Character: Now, tho' nothing that is *infinite* can be fully comprehended by us, yet some imperfect Idea may be form'd of the *infinite Knowledge* of God, by comparing it with the Knowledge of created
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Intellectual Beings, or by considering it in its Effects, and with relation to the Government of this World.

As to the Knowledge of created intellectual Beings, tho' that of the *Angels*, who are pure intellectual Spirits, be very great, and surpasses by many Degrees the largest Capacity of human Understanding, yet being *created*, it is by Consequence *limited*: The eternal Wisdom has set Bounds to it as to the Ocean, and said, *thus far it shall go and no farther*: Nay, tho' God should every Moment, to the World's End, create Angels still perfecter in Knowledge, yet the perfectest of them would still say with St. *Michael*, *quis ut Deus? who is as God?* because a Knowledge which is *infinite*, that is, unlimited and without Bounds, cannot be measured by one that is limited: A single Drop of Water has a Proportion to the whole Ocean; God perfectly knows what the Proportion is, and can make an exact Enumeration of the Number of Drops which suffice to compose that vast Body of Waters; because both the one and the other are limited, and have their Bounds precisely measured out: But the Distance between a limited and unlimited Perfection, is always *infinite*, and to whatever Perfection the Knowledge of a Creature may be raised, it is not so much as the smallest Drop of

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Water to the whole Ocean, if compared to the infinite Wisdom and Knowledge of God.

However, our Idea of it will be still rais'd higher, if we consider it in it's Effects, and with relation to the Government of the World: Consider therefore this vast Bulk of the terrestrial Globe, and the Air that encompasses it: The Earth, inhabited by Millions of Souls, adorn'd with a prodigious Variety of Trees, Plants, and Flowers, and affording Nourishment both above Ground, and within its Bowels, to innumerable sensitive Creatures: The Seas, Lakes, and Rivers stock'd with Fish, and the Air with Fowl: Then consider again, that altho' this prodigious Body of the Universe has already subsisted for many Ages, yet it continues still as vigorous in all it's Productions, and as regular and uniform in passing yearly thro' all that admirable Succession and Variety of Seasons, as it was in the very Beginning of it's Creation: The Order of Nature is regularly maintain'd, the same Causes produce the same Effects now as they did above five Thousand Years ago; and tho' all Mankind, and other living Creatures, be daily supplied by the Earth, Sea, and Air, yet their Stores are neither exhausted nor diminished by it.

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Here then we may justly cry out with St. Paul, *O unsearchable Depth of the Treasure of Wisdom, and Knowledge of God!* which neither Length of Time can wear out, nor Distance of Place divide, nor Variety of Objects distract, nor Multiplicity of Business perplex or weaken; *a Thousand Years,* says the royal Prophet, *are before thine Eyes like Yesterday, which is just past.* And so a Thousand different Objects, nay, if you please, a Million of Millions are no more than a single one of the most trivial Nature, to the infinite Wisdom and Knowledge of God. Because being infinite, it cannot be confined either by Number or Place, but *reaching strongly from End to End* is present to all Objects, Times, and Places; and disposes, moves, and governs all Things with the same immoveable Tranquillity, Order, and Attention, as if it had but one single Creature to inspect and provide for.

Neither must we imagine that his infinite Wisdom only applies itself to the most weighty Concerns of this World, and leaves the rest to Chance, or the pure Course of Nature: For *Christ* himself has taken care to instruct us, that the *divine Providence*, and by Consequence, *Knowledge*, extends itself even to the most trivial Things; as the *numbering the very Hairs*
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of our Heads, or the Destiny of a little Bird scarce worth a Farthing: *Are not two Sparrows, says Christ, sold for a Farthing, and one of them shall not fall to the Ground without your Father.* After which nothing more can be said to heighten our Idea of the unsearchable Depth and boundless Extent of an infinite Knowledge, particularly as it regards the great Business of the last Day, and the strict Account to be made in it: For if amongst so many Millions of Creatures, as are the Objects of God's Providence, even so inconsiderable a one as a Sparrow is not forgotten before the Father, as St. Luke expresses it; if the Government of the whole Universe, with all the weighty Affairs transacted in it, cannot hinder him from taking an exact Cognisance of the Number ~~even~~ of the *Hairs of our Heads*, we may in some measure conceive how terrible a Thing it will be to appear before a Judge so infinitely knowing; and conclude, that not even the smallest Circumstance of the longest Life will pass without being strictly examined by him.

We must therefore consider the infinite Knowledge of God as a vast Book, in which all our Thoughts, Words, and Deeds, with every Circumstance relating to them, are distinctly and particularly set down: Nothing will be forgot, nothing omitted,

omitted, nothing disguised ; not even the most secret Intentions and Motives upon which we have acted : And in the Moment we appear before the sacred Tribunal, *this Book will be open'd*, as St. John expresses it, and give us as clear a View of all the Particulars of our Lives, as if we saw them written in the Beams of the Sun : *Ordinabuntur ante infelicem animam omnia peccata sua*, says St. Austin, Serm. 181 ; that is, *the unhappy Sinner shall see all his Sins ranged in exact Order before him* : Not only those, that have been committed in publick, but those also which he has industriously conceal'd from the Eyes of Men. *There is nothing cover'd*, says Christ, *that shall not be reveal'd, nor hid, that shall not be known*. All his Hypocrisy will be unmark'd, and his Works of Darknes exposed in the clearest Light : For *Darkness*, says the Royal Prophet, *shall not be hid from thee, and Night shall be enlighten'd like Day*. The Sins of Youth, which have been long forgot by the Criminal, will be presented as fresh before him, as if they had been committed that very Day : *Because a thousand Years are before God's Eyes like Yesterday, which is just past* ; and those, which have been overlook'd, either through culpable Ignorance, or wilful Neglect, will appear on Account, not according

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to the erroneous Judgment made of them, by a bias'd and partial Conscience, but as they are in themselves, and the unerring Judgment of God.

But this is not all: For not only the Sins we have committed, but also the Duties we have omitted, and the Favours we have received, and not profited by, will be brought to light, and an Account demanded of them: They are all faithfully set down in the great Book of Accounts, and neither the Number of Years we have lived, nor the Variety of Circumstances through which our Lives have passed, will in the least perplex the Evidence, or confound the exact Order with which they will be produced against us. *The unhappy Sinner will see all his Sins ranged in Order before him.*

Here all the Time we have imbezel'd or mispent, the Talents we have buried under Ground, the temporal Blessings we have abused, and the Graces we have neglected, will be manifested with the utmost convincing Evidence. And since there is no State of Life, but has many Duties incumbent on it, the Omission of those Duties will be a separate Article in the Indictment brought against us: Many Persons, free, perhaps, from Sins in their private Lives, will be found great Sinners, when
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consider'd in their publick Capacities. *A Prince, a Magistrate, a Pastor, a Parent, or Master of a Family,* have many more besides themselves to answer for: Abuses in a Government or Community, that might and ought to have been reform'd, will be charged upon the Magistrate or Superior, by whom they have been tolerated or connived at; sinful Disorders not corrected in a Family, will be placed on Account to the Master or Mistress of it, tho' they were not personally guilty of them; Children lost by the Neglect of their Parents will be required at their Hands. And so it will be in relation to all the respective Duties of the Station in which God has placed us.

Hence it appears, how terrible a Thing it will be for a Sinner dying in Impenitence; to fall into the Hands of an omniscient Judge, who with a Ray of that infinite Light in which he dwells, will dissipate in an Instant all the Darkneſs he has not only lived in but indulged, and discover to him, at one single View, the whole State of his unhappy Soul. Oh! what a dreadful Sight will it be for an unfortunate Criminal to see, not only all his own personal Sins committed from the first Use of Reason to his dying Day, all the Abuses of God's Favours, and all the Omissions he has ever
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been guilty of, but over and above all, the Sins of others, to which he has been accessory, placed before him, all at once, in so clear a Light, that it will be impossible for him either to deny, excuse, or answer any one single Point laid to his Charge.

We may in some Measure conceive the Terror, Confusion, and Despair this will cause in a criminal Soul, if we but consider, what a Torment it is to a Conscience charged with many Crimes, to enter seriously into itself, even in this Life. For since Men are usually afraid to look their Sins in the Face, and do what they can to turn their Thoughts away from them; since it is evident from Experience, that a guilty Conscience, whose Remorses cannot be avoided, is a kind of Hell upon Earth, and that the Anguish and Terror of it has driven some to the most violent Extremities even in this World, where there is always Hope of Mercy, where there are many Intervals of Ease, where no Man can see the whole Number of his Sins at once, nor any one of them in it's full Deformity: This, I say, being the Case of a criminal Conscience, even in this World, what an unspeakable Torture will it be to a Sinner dying in Impenitence, when in the Moment that Death closes the Eyes of his Body, and opens those of his Soul, he
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sees, at a single View, that vast Multitude of Sins, with which his Conscience stands charged, clearly and distinctly before him, attended with all the aggravating Circumstances, which are often more enormous, and cause a heavier Load of Confusion, than the Sins themselves; and all this without any Hopes of Mercy or Comfort! Because the same Light, which discovers to him the Number and Enormity of his Sins, makes him also clearly see his Doom, and everlasting Exclusion from all farther Share in the Mercies of God.

I shall conclude this Discourse with two practical Reflections. The first regards those, who seem to be well enough at ease, so they can but hide their Sins from the Knowledge of Men, and therefore stick not to do those Things before the all-seeing Eyes of God, which they would certainly forbear to do, if they but suspected that they were within the Observation of the meanest Creature upon Earth. Now, tho' we must allow that this cautious Way of sinning is at least a Mark that they who practise it have not lost all Shame (which is always a commendable Quality, and prevents the Guilt of publick Scandal) yet we cannot but say, that their proceeding is very unaccountable, in that they are so much aw'd by meer human Respects, and the Fear of
Confusion

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Confusion before Men, and have at the same time no Regard to the Knowledge and Judgment of God, whom they know to be actually present to, and an Eye-witness of, every Sin they commit.

These therefore ought to reflect frequently and seriously upon the following Truths:

1. That whenever they sin, tho' never so secretly, 'tis in the Presence of Him who is one Day to be their Judge. 2. That he not only knows all their Sins, but keeps an Account of them, and lays them up against the *Day of Wrath*, to be then brought to light, to their eternal Confusion. 3. That it avails them nothing to keep up a Reputation with Men, whilst at the same time they forfeit the Favour and Esteem of God, by whose Judgment alone they must stand or fall. *Lastly*, That after all they will be disappointed, even as to what they seem to take most to Heart, *viz.* the Concealment of their Sins from Men. Because, in the last *General Judgment*, every thing will be made known, and even their most secret Sins exposed to the View of all Mankind. If these Truths were deeply imprinted in Men's Hearts, and not only believed, but sensibly felt by them, which can only be the Effect of a long and serious Meditation, it is not to be doubted, but they would by Degrees become a happy

py Restraint even upon the most violent Inclinations, and make Men at least as much afraid to transgress in the Presence of Almighty God, as before a Person for whose Judgment and Esteem they have a real Value.

My second Reflection regards those, who through Shame either lay aside the Use of the Sacraments, or, what is worse, become guilty of Sacrilege, by the Concealment of some Sin in Confession. I own, some Tempers, naturally bashful and reserved, are much to be pitied in this Point; but whatever their Difficulty may be, it must be overcome: And it is hard to say, whether the *Sin* or *Folly* in being overcome by it be greater. I shall hereafter treat both the one and the other at large; at present I shall only touch upon the latter, as it has a Connection with the great Truth I have laid before you, which sets the *Folly* of this Sin in it's strongest and clearest Light, and shews plainly that the Persons guilty of it are no less wanting to Reason and good Sense, than their Duty: For ask but a Person of the meanest Capacity, when the Choice of two Evils is proposed, which of the two is to be prefer'd, the *lesser* or the *greater*? And he will certainly answer, the *lesser*. Ask a Criminal, whether he will rather choose a private Disgrace,

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or publick Ignominy? and you may be sure he will not spend much Time in deliberating upon the Matter, because a private Disgrace is the lesser Evil of the two.

Now this is the very Case of a Person guilty of some Crime committed against God. He must either submit to a private Confusion, in accusing himself of it to his Confessor, or undergo the publick Ignominy of having it one Day exposed, to his eternal Shame and Confusion, before the Eyes of all the World. One of the two must be; and he has it now in his Power to choose either the one or the other. The first is but a momentary Confusion, follow'd immediately by an entire Repose and Ease of Conscience; and so private, that no Man alive but his Confessor can have any Knowledge of it. The other is a publick Disgrace, in the Face of God, and all his Saints and Angels: And the violent Impression of Shame and Confusion, which it makes upon the Soul in that Moment, will last for all Eternity. I ask then, whether a Person can pretend to be in his right Senses, if he prefers the latter? The Case is too plain against him to admit of a Dispute.

Let us then beseech Almighty God to imprint in our Hearts so deep a Sense of his infinite Knowledge, and the strict Account

count we shall be called to, that whether we be in Publick or Private, in Company or alone, we may be afraid to do any thing, displeasing to his pure Eyes, and for which we shall be exposed to everlasting Confusion hereafter.

The Tenth ENTERTAINMENT.

Two other Qualities of the Judge.

He will render to every one according to his Deeds, Rom. ii. 6.

IN my last Discourse I promised to consider three Things in the Judge before whom we are to appear: 1. His infinite Knowledge, from which nothing can be concealed: 2. His being the very Person whom we offend by every Sin we commit: and, 3. His being infinitely just. I have already spoken of the first. The two latter Considerations shall therefore be the Subject of this Entertainment.

We shall be able to conceive, in some measure, how great a Terror it will be to appear before a Judge, who is the very Person that has been offended and injured by us, if we but consider the Repugnance all Men naturally have to see those to whom

whom they have done any remarkable Injury or Affront. A Person who is conscious to himself of having been notoriously ungrateful to his Benefactor, suffers a sensible Mortification in appearing before him. His Blushes betray the inward Shame and Trouble of his Mind; because the Presence and Sight of his Benefactor revive in it the Idea of his Favours, and the ill Returns he has made for them. A Wife, that has abused the Conjugal Bed, unless she be an abandoned Creature, and lost to all Shame, cannot bear the Sight of her Husband, if she knows for certain that he is informed of the Injustice she has done him. So a Subject, who has betray'd his Prince, dreads nothing more than to appear before him; because his very Presence is a Reproach to his guilty Conscience, and upbraids him with the Foulness of his Crime. Thus *Adam* had no sooner eaten the forbidden Fruit, but he hid himself from the Face of the Lord; and that which till then had been his greatest Glory and Delight, became all on a sudden his greatest Terror.

But the History of *Joseph* and his Brothers affords one of the most remarkable Instances of this Truth. You all know how they contrived his Death; but upon the Remonstrances of *Judah*, sold him to certain

certain Merchants, who carried him away into *Egypt*, and there sold him for a Slave; where some Years after he was, by God's Providence, raised to the highest Dignity, and made Superintendant of all *Egypt*. At which time, by the same Disposition of Providence, there happened a great Dearth all the World over, and *Joseph's* Brothers amongst others were obliged to go into *Egypt* to buy Corn of him. He knew them all at the very first Interview, but was not known by them till some Days after he discovered himself in the following Manner: Having ordered those who were present to withdraw, and being alone with his Brothers, he gave full Vent to the Tenderness of his Heart, and bursting out into a Flood of Tears, he only spoke these kind Words to them: *Fear not, I am your Brother Joseph: Is my Father still alive?* At which Discovery of himself, tho' in so tender a Manner, the Scripture tells us, they were all struck dumb with excessive Fear. *Non poterant respondere fratres, nimio terrore perterriti.* The unexpected Sight of a Brother, and that in such happy Circumstances, which would have caused a Transport of Joy in others, seized them with Terror and Confusion; because his Presence revived in an Instant as fresh a Remembrance of all the Injustice

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tice they had done him, as if they had committed it that very Day.

This is a weak Representation of what will happen to reprobate Sinners in the Moment that Christ shall manifest himself visibly to them : For as the Sight of him, all Glorious, Impassible, and Immortal, will be the Glory, Joy, and Comfort of the Elect, so will it be the Terror of the Wicked. *Videntes turbabuntur timore horribili*: Seeing him they shall be struck with a dreadful Fear, says the Word of God ; because they shall see in him a *Benefactor*, whom they have repaid with Ingratitude ; a *Spouse*, whom they have abused ; a *Sovereign*, whom they have betrayed ; and a *Brother*, whom they have many times sold for a sordid Interest, or brutal Pleasure.

But he will not then say to them as *Joseph* did, *Fear not, I am your Brother*, nor shed Tears of Compassion over them ; but, on the contrary, the very Terror and Majesty of his Looks will in an Instant convince them, that he, who till then has been their injured *Saviour* and *Redeemer*, is now come to be their *Judge*. *Horrende apparebit*, says the wise Man : *He will appear to them in a dreadful Manner*. He will then shew them the *precious Blood* they have trampled upon, by their sacrilegious Communions ;
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the sacred Body they have *crucified afresh*, and put to open Shame, by their scandalous Lives; and the Wounds of his Hands and Feet and sacred Side, which they have *renewed* a thousand times by their enormous Crimes. St. *Austin* represents him speaking to them in this Manner: *Videte vulnera, quæ inflixistis, agnoscite latus, quod pupugistis*: That is, *See the Wounds you inflicted, see the Side you have pierced*. Oh! what a dreadful Sight will this be! The Sight of a Judge, who has been despised, mocked, and crucified by the Criminal whose Doom he is going to pronounce: The Sight of a Judge, who knows every aggravating Circumstance of all the Crimes he has ever committed against him: Finally, the Sight of a Judge, who is *infinitely just*, and will accordingly do himself Justice to the utmost Rigour.

Now this last Quality, I mean, his *infinite Justice*, added to the two former, renders the Case of a Person dying in mortal Sin, and summoned before the Tribunal of Christ, not only frightful beyond Imagination, but utterly desperate: For tho' his Judge were *infinitely knowing*, tho' he were the *Party offended* in all his Crimes, yet if there were still room for Mercy, if the Judge were capable of being either biased by Interest or Inclination, or moved with Compassion, to mitigate at least the Sentence, and not

pronounce against him according to the utmost Rigour of Justice, this would be at least some Comfort. But the Judge is not only just, but *infinitely just*; and an *infinite Justice*, joined with an *infinite Knowledge* of the Merits of the Cause, excludes all Hopes of any milder Sentence, than precisely what the Number and Quality of his Sins have deserved: Because Justice, as it regards the Office of a Judge, is a Virtue which determines him to bestow Rewards, and inflict Punishments, exactly proportioned to the Merits of the Cause he has before him. So that the greatest Saint will be judged by Christ with the same Exactness and Equality of Justice as the greatest Sinner: Because, as *St. Paul* tells us, *he will render to every Man according to his Works.*

In this World indeed Things are not so. Justice is often perverted, either through the Weakness or Corruption of the Judge: And so it happens many times, that Innocence is oppressed, and Wickedness rewarded, or at least unpunished. But suppose Justice were always administer'd impartially, yet in this World there would seldom be an exact Equality between the Punishment and the Crime: because this Equality is wholly unknown to Men, which by Consequence makes most human
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Laws defective ; and where the Rule itself is defective, the Practice guided by it must be so too. So that the Justice of this World is but a faint Shadow of that of the other, where every thing will be according to exact Weight and Measure : And therefore, as every Saint in Heaven will possess a Degree of Glory exactly proportioned to the Merits of his past good Works, so will every damn'd Soul in Hell have his Degree of Torments measured out to him with the most exact Proportion to the Number, Quality, and each aggravating Circumstance of his Sins. *Quantum fuit in deliciis, tantum date illi tormenta ;* that is, *as much as he has been in Delights, so much Torment let him suffer,* will be the Doom of *Babylon*, and of every reprobate Soul : And this exact Proportion will be determined in the very Instant that the criminal Soul appears before the Tribunal of Christ.

Neither will he have the least Regard to the Riches, Titles, or Dignity of any Person ; for *there is no Respect of Persons with God*, who hates Sin, and will punish it with equal Rigour wherever he finds it. So that before the great Tribunal there will be no other Distinction between King and Subjects, Master and Servants, but that which is grounded upon the Merits or De-

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merits of their Lives past. Nay, *Greatness* and *Wealth* will rather entitle the Possessors to a severer Judgment: because they are *Talents*, with which they were intrusted, and an Account will be demanded, whether they have employ'd them to the Benefit or Prejudice of their own and Neighbours Souls. A great Man is generally either a *great Good* or a *great Evil* to Mankind, and the Instrument either of God's *Wrath* or *Mercy* on those who depend upon him: And therefore as he seldom goes unattended either to Hell or Heaven, so his Reward will be the greater in proportion to the Number he has helped to save, and his Torments will likewise receive an additional Increase on the score of every Person, to whose Damnation he has been accessary by the Power and Influence of his Example, or otherwise. And so this sacred Oracle, *potentes potenter tormenta patientur*, that is, *the mighty shall suffer mighty Torments*, which makes their Greatness the Measure of the Punishment, will be fully verified of them.

Thus will the infinite Justice of God exert itself in the last Day, by inflicting Punishments with an equal and impartial Hand, and demanding of every Man the last Farthing of the Debt he has contracted. And this Debt will be computed not
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only by the Number and Quality of the Sins he has committed and not satisfied for, but also by the Benefits he has received whether temporal or spiritual; of which there will be a dreadful Example in those Cities, where Christ preached, and wrought many Miracles without Fruit; since he himself, who is to be their Judge, has already pronounced this terrible Sentence upon them, that even the wicked Cities of *Sodom* and *Gomorrha*, will in the Day of Judgment be more favourably treated than they: because that signal Blessing of his Preaching, and working Miracles amongst them, being a *Talent* received, and not improved, must be accounted for, and will but serve to inflame the Reckoning. And therefore as it will aggravate the Debt contracted by their other Sins, so will it in the same Proportion increase their Punishment. And this will also be the unhappy Case of reprobate *Christians*, who having received and abused Favours for surpassing those of the *Jews*, will by Consequence receive a far severer Judgment than they, and be the most unfortunate of all human Creatures.

Nor is this exact Severity of God's *Justice* in the other World any ways derogating from that *infinite Mercy* so much extoll'd in Holy Writ. For as God is infinite in all his Attributes, so his Mercy is
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that peculiar one, by which he chiefly delights to manifest himself to Men, during the Course of this mortal Life. *His Mercies* (says the Royal Prophet) *are above all his Works.* And even his *Omnipotence* (according to a celebrated Prayer of the Church) shews itself in nothing so much as in the *Works of his Mercy.* But since all outward Communications of the divine Attributes in this World are created Effects, and all created Effects are limited, it follows that tho' God's Mercy be infinite in itself, it has it's stinted Bounds in relation to his Creatures. The Source itself is inexhaustible, and flows incessantly upon all Men in this Life, whether Saints or Sinners, tho' not with the same Profusion. But the whole Course of its Stream is in an Instant turn'd away from a Sinner dying in Impenitence.

So that the whole Life of Man may properly be call'd the Time of Mercy. No Sinner's Case is so desperate, but God has provided Remedies for it. His Arms are stretched out to receive him. The Fountains of Grace are always open, and the sacred Blood of Christ, which they contain, suffices to wash away the blackest Crimes. So that nothing but his own perverse Will can hinder him from applying its infinite Virtue to itself, and becoming Partaker of
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the *plentiful Redemption* which he has prepared for all. Now those are all undoubted Instances of an infinite Mercy. But the Fruit and Application of it, in relation to the Soul of any impenitent Sinner, ceases in the very Moment that the Breath goeth out of his Body. He enters then into another World, where *Justice* takes place, and performs its Part, as *Mercy* did in the most bountiful manner, whilst he was in a State to be Partaker of it. But having been deaf to the very last to all its Calls and Solicitations, he then falls into the Hands of rigorous Justice; is summon'd before its sacred Tribunal, and receives his unchangeable Doom precisely according to his Works.

For this Reason, the last Day is never mention'd in Holy Scripture, but in Terms proper to strike the Heart with Terror. It is called the *Day of Wrath*. *A Day of Calamity and Distress*. *A Day exceedingly bitter*. But why is it that the Word of God has represented a Day, on which our eternal Interest depends, and is by Consequence so terrible in itself, in such frightful Colours, as seem to heighten rather than mitigate the Terror of it? Is it to throw us into Despair, or weaken our Confidence in the Mercies of our divine Redeemer? By no Means. On the contrary, the only End it aims at is to season our Souls

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with a wholesome Fear. That Fear, I say, which the *Psalmist* calls the *Beginning of Wisdom*: That Fear, which keeps the Ballance of the Soul equally poised between *Presumption* and *Despair*: Finally, that Fear, which naturally puts us upon our guard against the Danger that threatens us, and by spurring us on to a vigorous War against Sin, and the Practice of good Works, lays the Foundation of a solid Confidence in God, and a sincere Love of him.

Hence the *Psalmist* calls the *Man blessed, who fears the Lord, because he shall take great Delight in his Commandments*. And the *Wise Man* tells us, that *Fear shall delight the Heart*. But how is this? since we find by Experience, that what we do out of Fear, is rather a painful Constraint upon Nature, than a Source of Delight or Pleasure. But the Answer is clear and easy. For, tho' it be certainly true, that if the whole Work of our Salvation were to be carried on by meer *servile Fear*, we should find but little Comfort in the Path of God's Commandments; yet if we consider, that we are not to stop there, but pass on to a better Disposition; if we consider, that *Fear* is but the Harbinger of *Love*, and prepares the Way to it, by removing Obstacles, and applying us to the proper Means to introduce it, we shall have no
Difficulty

Difficulty to conceive that *Fear* is no Enemy to true Pleasure, that is, to the solid Repose of our Souls; but, on the contrary, is wholly in its Interest, as being an Instrument, Encourager, and Promoter of it.

The Reason, therefore, why Fear is said to be the *Beginning of Wisdom*, and a Source of *Delight* to the Soul, is, because what is first begun by *Fear* is improved gradually, and perfected by *Love*. Fear is as the Centinel that gives the first Alarm, and warns us of the approaching Danger. But whilst we are fighting for God's Cause with the Arms of Prayer, and other Holy Exercises proper for our spiritual Combat, Love comes in, and takes the command into his Hands, and when Love commands in the Heart, every Thing is perform'd with Delight; so that Fear is as necessary to secure our Souls, as Centinels and advanced Guards are necessary to secure an Army, when an Enemy is near. Which made the Wise Man declare, that it is impossible to be justified without Fear. *Qui sine timore est non poterit justificari.* Eccl. i. ver. 28.

In effect; the first step to a Sinner's Conversion is usually owing to a lively Apprehension of the Severity of God's Judgments. This gives a Check to the Violence of his

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Passions. This makes him solicitous to discover and practise the Means necessary to avoid the dreadful Evils that threaten him. His practising these Means enlightens by Degrees his Understanding, softens the Heart, and inflames the Will. And so it is that *Love* is introduced, and accomplishes the Work of Salvation, which was at first begun through meer *servile Fear*.

If therefore upon hearing or reading a severe Truth any one finds himself seized with Fear, let not that dishearten him; it is a good Symptom, and he has Reason to hope in God's Mercies, because he fears his Justice. *Pierce my Heart with thy Fear* was the Prayer of the *Royal Prophet*. For it is God himself inspires us with this Disposition, for our greater Security; since those who are abandon'd by him neither fear him nor desire to fear him; because it disturbs their Pleasures, and Self-love is uneasy with it; but the Love of God finds its Account in it, in being not only introduced, but fortified and secured by it.

We ought therefore to fear God, that we may love him, and we ought never to cease to fear him, that we may never cease to love him. The more we fear him now, the greater will our Security be, when we come to die. *Timenti, Dominum bene erit in extremis*, says Solomon; *he who fears the Lord,*

Lord, will be easy in the End of his Days.
And when Death summons him to appear before the Tribunal of Christ, he will stand before him, not with the Terror of a Criminal going to receive the Sentence of eternal Death, but with the Confidence of a faithful Servant, expecting the full Remcompence of his past Labours, in the Enjoyment of a happy Eternity.

The Eleventh ENTERTAINMENT.

The Examination to be made of our hidden Sins.

I am not conscious to myself of any Thing ; yet am I not hereby justified : But he that judgeth me is the Lord. 1 Cor. iv. 4.

THIS was spoke by a Saint of the first Class, who after his Conversion devoted himself wholly to the Service of *Jesus Christ* and his Holy Church. His Labours and Sufferings for the Planting of the Gospel were without Intermission ; and nothing but the most ardent Zeal for the Honour and Interest of his Master could have supported him under the many Hardships, Outrages, and Persecutions to which his sacred Ministry continually exposed him.

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him. God had also manifested his Holiness by many Miracles, and his Ravishment to the third Heaven was an undoubted Pledge of the high Degree of Favour to which God had raised him; yet amidst the eminent Virtues that shined in him, the faithful Discharge of his laborious Ministry, and the Favours God had heap'd upon him, joined with a Conscience entirely free from Reproach, this great Saint was not without some Fear of the Judgments of the *Searcher of Hearts*; as appears from the foremention'd Words of my Text: *I am not, says he, conscious to myself of any thing: yet I am not hereby justified. But he that judgeth me is the Lord.*

This contains a very useful and instructive Lesson, warning us not to be over confident of ourselves, whatever Virtue we may seem to possess. There are many Christians (and it were to be wish'd the Number were far greater) who, tho' inferior by many Degrees to the Merits of *St. Paul*, yet leading a kind of regular and innocent Life, may in some measure say with him, that *they are not conscious to themselves of any thing*; that is, of any noted Crime, or remarkable Transgression of the Law of God. But can this give them an entire Security of being *justified*? *St. Paul* says positively it cannot, *because he that judgeth me is the Lord.* Hence

Hence it follows manifestly, that there are *bidden Sins* known to God alone, for which however we are to be accountable to him. The proud *Pharisee*, mentioned in the Gospel, was not conscious to himself of any Thing: Nay, he had a great Opinion of his own Virtue and Merits. Yet we all know how criminal he was in the Sight of God. The Case of the Bishop of *Laodicea*, mention'd in the third Chapter of the *Revelations*, was much the same: For he was fully satisfied with the State he was in, imagining himself to be *Rich* in Grace and Merits. Whereas the Searcher of Hearts order'd St. *John* to let him know, that he was *wretched and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked.* Rev. iii. 17.

Thus many are apt to over-rate their own Merits, and be mislead by it into a Security, which usually becomes the Mother of Sloth, Tepidity, and Presumption. They see themselves free from the customary Vices of Mankind (and 'tis doubtless a Blessing to be highly valued, and acknowledged with the deepest Sense of Gratitude; but they consider not with St. *Paul*, that *he who judgeth is the Lord*, and that by Consequence there may be many Defects and Blemishes in their Souls, which escape their Notice, but cannot escape the pure and all-discerning Eyes of him who will judge.

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them, not according to what they appear to themselves or others, but according to what they really are. I shall therefore, in this Entertainment, lay down some genuine Reasons, for which the most virtuous, in Appearance, may mistrust themselves on the score of *hidden Sins*, whereof there will be a strict Examination made on the great Day of Accounts.

There are two Sorts of hidden Sins, which will be placed to our Account at the Day of Judgment. *First*, those which we know to be Sins, but through Heedlessness seldom observe ourselves to be guilty of them. And, *2dly*, Those which we commit with sufficient Reflection, but persuade ourselves to be no Sins. As to the former Sort, which are occasion'd by Heedlessness, and Want of Care, every one may make some guess to what Degree he may be concerned in them, by only reflecting in what measure he has been wanting in his Endeavours to prevent them. For they that live in a State of Idleness, indulging themselves in all the dangerous Liberties of the World, or are naturally of a negligent and heedless Temper, and take no care to arm themselves against this Evil; these, I say, may reasonably suspect themselves accountable for many secret Sins;

I. Of

1. Of *Omission*, particularly in the Neglect of Duties relating to their respective State or Calling.

2. Of *Thought*, by being guilty of many rash Judgments to the Prejudice of their Neighbour; by Thoughts of Revenge, or such as are contrary to Christian Purity; by ill Wishes, or unlawful Desires, and the like.

3. Of the *Tongue*, by Back-biting or worldly Discourses; by spreading or improving uncharitable Reports, and so forth; to say nothing of the many Sins they may be guilty of, by performing the best Part of their Actions purely upon Motives of Self-Interest, Vanity, or other human Respects: For if even those, who keep a constant Watch upon themselves, are nevertheless apt not only to be surprised into but even to overlook many of the Sins here mentioned, how jealous ought they to be of themselves, who live without Care, speak without Caution, let their Thoughts and Tongues run at random, and seldom look into themselves to observe the Motions and Intentions of their Hearts? Truly, it is morally impossible but Persons of this Character must fall into many Sins of which they have no Knowledge; or if at Times some Checks of Conscience serve as Monitors to give them Notice of what they

they are thinking or saying amiss, these generally go off without leaving any lasting Impression, being either stifled or diverted by other Thoughts crowding in upon them. And whereas these careless and slothful Christians seldom give themselves the Trouble of a diligent Examination of Conscience at Night, by Means whereof the most considerable Failings of each Day might be discovered, and laid up safe in their Memories, in order to be brought to a more rigorous Account in their next Confession; the unavoidable Consequence of this Neglect is, that many even of those Sins, which they took notice of in the committing, go by Degrees out of their Minds, and so perhaps are never more thought of, till Death and Judgment brings them to light. And tho' God alone, who is to be the Judge, can tell in what measure Sins thus overlooked or forgot will be laid to their Charge, 'tis certain, however, that the more wilful the Neglect has been, the less room there will be for Mercy, unless heartily repented of, and amended in due Time.

Now as to what relates to those *bidden Sins*, which we commit with sufficient Reflection, but persuade ourselves to be no Sins, the Root of these is a *culpable or affected Ignorance*, occasioned either by
Neglect,

Neglect, Insincerity, Prevention, or the Delusion of Self-love: For the clearer understanding whereof, we are to observe, that there are two sorts of *Ignorance*, viz. an *invincible* and a *culpable* one. A Person is said to labour under an *invincible Ignorance*, when he never had it in his Power to inform himself of the Truth: And this Ignorance being without any Fault on his Side, excuses from Sin; nor will any Omissions or Transgressions occasioned by it be laid to his Charge.

But a Person is *culpably ignorant*, when it is his own Fault that he knows no better; and this is the Case of all those who either wilfully shut their Eyes against the Truth, or out of *Sloth*, and Want of Concern for their Souls, neglect the ordinary Means appointed by Providence for their being sufficiently instructed in their Duty. Now 'tis a great Mistake to imagine, that this Ignorance will be any Excuse in Favour of those who are concerned in it; because it is their own Fault, if they transgress for want of knowing their Duty; since they might have known it, had they but taken care to inform themselves: And therefore, as their Ignorance is wilful, so all the Miscarriages occasioned by it are also wilful, and by consequence inexcusable.

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But as *Neglect*, or Want of Care, is the Occasion of Ignorance in some, so *Insincerity* is a no less ordinary Root of it in others. Many seem very solicitous to know what is lawful or unlawful in certain doubtful Cases; They pretend to take Advice, and shew a Readiness to follow it; but being insincere at Heart, and rather afraid than really desirous to know the Truth, they use Double-dealing in their pretended Search of it, by mis-stating their Case, and either adding some material Circumstance which wholly disguises the true Nature of it, or concealing something which might give Light to those they consult. By this Means their Directors, who have no Reason to mistrust any such unfair Dealing, are imposed upon; and misjudging their Case, give their Opinion or Advice accordingly: And thus, instead of shewing them the Way to Heaven, are the innocent Occasion of their being mislead, or confirmed in their former Errors. But tho' the deluded Directors be innocent in this Case, those who trapan them into an Approbation of what is really unwarrantable, are far from being so; and tho' they may in some measure stifle the Murmurs of Conscience, by foolishly persuading themselves that they act according to the Direction or Consent of their Spiritual Guides, their pretended Ignorance, under which they
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imagine to shelter themselves, will avail them nothing at the great Day of Accounts, and all their Transgressions occasioned by it stand in full against them.

Another fruitful Source of hidden Sins is a *strong Prevention*, imbibed either by Education, or the Discourses of Persons whose Judgment, and even Virtue, we have a great Opinion of. This was the Case of the *Jewish People*, who having a great Opinion of the Learning and Virtue of the *Pharisees*, were, by their Discourses and malicious Insinuations, so violently prepossessed against our Blessed Saviour, that they even demanded his Death. 'Tis true, this Prevention may be very innocent, as long as it regards only *indifferent Things* or *Opinions*, and is not heighten'd into a Party-Zeal, so as to cause warm Disputes, whereby Charity is often wounded. But if it regards the Reputation of any Person, or, what is worse, of a great Number of Persons, and is at the same time wholly groundless, and by consequence unjust, as it often happens, then 'tis far from being innocent: Nay, 'tis the Root of numberless Sins; 1st, Because Persons under this Prevention seldom make any scruple of entertaining the most rash and uncharitable Judgments of those against whom they are thus prepossessed; and, 2^{dly}, Because these
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rash Judgments are the immediate Source of innumerable Defamations, whereby Persons of solid Virtue and Merit have often been ruined both in their Reputation and Fortune, and thereby render'd incapable of being serviceable to their Neighbour in the Station wherein Providence has placed them. And will the God of Justice leave such crying Injustices unpunished ! Or will they be excused by a pretended Ignorance ! I fear not, as long as the Parties concerned stop their Ears to every thing that may disabuse them of their Error, and have them only open to hear Reports proper to nourish and strengthen their Prevention ; which renders their Ignorance wholly inexcusable, because they have it in their Power to be delivered from it if they please.

A fourth Root of culpable Ignorance is, any *irregular Inclination* or *secret Passion* in the Soul ; for every Degree of Passion being attended with a proportionable Degree of Spiritual Blindness, the Judgment is always more or less bias'd or corrupted by it, and prepossessed in Favour of it ; and so if any Doubt arises concerning what is lawful or unlawful, it is ever apt to lean on that Side which flatters the favourite Inclination. Thus an erroneous Conscience is formed by Degrees, the *Gospel*
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is accommodated to corrupt Nature, and the *narrow Way* to Heaven is made broad enough for Self-love to walk in ; yet Conscience is all the while pretended to be the Guide ; and so it is ; but it is a Conscience of their forming, who study to deceive themselves, and is therefore modelled in all Things suitably to the Inclination that is to be gratified.

'Tis according to this sort of Conscience, that many make no scruple at all to wrong their Creditors, and often put them to the greatest Hardships, by refusing or unreasonably delaying to pay their Debts ; which however is, in many Cases, the same Injustice as cheating or robbing them of their Money. 'Tis according to the same sort of Conscience, that many stick not to employ the most unfair and illegal Means to make their Fortune, or increase their Wealth. Their only Care is not to come within the Reach of human-Laws ; but they consider not, that they must one Day appear before a Tribunal, where *he that judgeth is the Lord*. Finally, 'tis according to this sort of Conscience, that many, having their Hearts fixed upon the World, indulging themselves in all its dangerous Pleasures, and living almost in a total Forgetfulness of Almighty God, and Neglect of the Duties relating to him, yet think all is well

well, and cry those down as indiscreetly rigid, who profess and teach a stricter Morality. And what is the Root of all this wilful and affected Ignorance, but some secret Passion in the Soul, which being a false Bias upon the Judgment, inclines it to approve or think favourably of every thing that flatters that Passion? And thus they walk on blindly in the Way of Perdition, in hopes to meet Heaven at the End of it, till Death opens their Eyes, and shews them the fatal Error they have lived under.

The last great Root of *hidden Sins* is a *slothful* and *lukewarm* Temper, which easily betrays those who are guilty of it even to Sins whereby God's Grace may be forfeited, and that without their being aware of it; for if we examine the Nature of *Sloth*, we shall find that a considerable Degree of it, especially when it becomes an habitual Indisposition, suffices alone to create a Mistrust of the State of a Soul infected with it. The Reason is, because a considerable Degree of Sloth seems altogether inconsistent with two of the most essential Duties of a Christian, *viz. the Love of God above all Things*, and the Obligation he has to *seek first the Kingdom of God*.

That it seems wholly inconsistent with the Love of God above all Things, appears plainly from the very Opposition of
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their Natures and Effects, which run all directly counter to one another ; for Sloth is *indifferent, languid, and unactive* in every thing that has a Relation to God ; always inclining us to our Ease and Satisfaction ; whereas the Love of God, when it is Mistress of the Heart, is *eager, watchful, vigorous, and active* in all the Concerns of Eternity : It renders us solicitous to know the Will of God, ready to obey it, and desirous to please him in all Things : In effect, whomsoever we love with an absolute Preference to all others, we are always solicitous to serve and please ; and therefore, when little or nothing of this appears in relation to God, 'tis a strong Symptom that the Love of him is not the prevailing Disposition of the Heart.

The same is to be said in reference to the great Duty incumbent on all Christians, of *seeking first the Kingdom of God* ; for how can the slothful Christian, who performs all Duties that have an immediate relation to God in a careless manner, be said to make Heaven his chief Concern ? Or with what Probability can we judge it to be the principal Object of his Desires, when we see him languid and indifferent in the Pursuit of it ? Change but the Case from Heaven to the World, and see whether an earnest Desire of it's Goods be
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ever without an earnest and vigorous Application to obtain them. Does a Man, that thirsts after Interest or Honour, leave any Means untried that favour his Desires, or Obstacle unremoved that stands in his Way? Does he not use all Endeavours possible to compass the End he aims at? And take all Precautions necessary to prevent a Disappointment? These are doubtless the Methods of the Children of this World; and the Reason is, because their Desires are eager, and eager Desires admit of no Indifference or Sloth. They naturally inspire the Soul with Vigour, put Life into her, and spur her on to Action, allowing her no Rest till all be done that can contribute to render them successful.

And is there not then Ground enough to conclude the *Kingdom of God* is not very earnestly desired, when nothing of this Spirit, Life, and Vigour appears towards the gaining of it; but, on the contrary, every thing is carried on with Coldness, Negligence, and Sloth? The Consequence is but too clear; and there follows another no less clearly from it, *viz.* that however a Person of this Character may value himself upon his Virtue, he has Reason enough to mistrust the State of his Soul, especially if to the two fore-mention'd Considerations
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be added the Danger such a one is in of coming often indisposed to the *Sacrament*.

The Reason is, because considering the Habits such a one has of doing Things negligently and by halves, 'tis much to be feared the same lazy and slothful Humour follows him mostly even to the Tribunal of Penance: And is there not then great Danger of such a one's coming to it wholly indisposed? The Case is but too clear: For since, of all the Duties of a Christian, his receiving the Sacraments is of the greatest Importance, and requires a very serious Preparation, what Encouragement have we to hope this from one, who is ever inclined to consult his Ease, and give way to the Suggestions of Sloth? Is there not, on the contrary, Reason enough to apprehend such a one will be faulty either in the due Examination of Conscience, or the Sorrow he ought to have? since these are Tasks which require a more serious Application, than a Person, accustomed to indulge his Sloth, will probably use to perform them as he ought.

However, 'tis here necessary to observe, that what has been said (particularly concerning the Danger of abusing the Sacraments) regards not Persons of a *timorous* or *tender* Conscience, as appears plainly from the Character I have given of those

Tom. I. I who

who alone are concern'd in it: For Persons of a timorous Conscience are always apt to overdo their Duty rather than fall short of it. Their chief Fault is too much Solicitude rather than Neglect; and their predominant Weakness is an immoderate Fear, which is so apt to make them run into Excesses on the *right side*, that they are in no Danger of erring on the *Left*: Nay if there be any Danger in their State, it consists in their being for the most Part too stiff and positive in the unfavourable Judgment they make of themselves, and not paying the Submission they ought to their Directors, who are better able to judge of their Condition than they themselves. Because an *excessive Fear* is no less apt to set Things in a false Light, and impose upon the Judgment, than *Presumption*: And therefore those, who are told by their Directors that they are subject to this Weakness, ought to be convinced that terrifying Truths are not intended for them, but for those alone, who, tho' careless and slothful in performing all Duties, yet live without Fear, and are therefore in danger of going on in the same slothful Way, and good Opinion of themselves, till Death presents them before the Tribunal of the great Searcher

Searcher of Hearts, before whom *nothing is cover'd that shall not be reveal'd, nor hid, that shall not be known.* Matt. x. 26.

The Twelfth ENTERTAINMENT.

Concerning the Account to be given of
other Men's Sins.

*Cleanse me from my bidden Sins, O Lord;
and from the Guilt of other Men's Sins
deliver thy Servant.* Psal. xviii. 13.

THIS was the humble Prayer of the
Royal Prophet, who was solicitous to
obtain God's pardon not only for his own
personal Sins, but those also to which he
had been any ways accessary in others.
And who is there amongst us, that does
not stand in need of this Mercy? who dares
confidently say his Soul is clear, or that he
has nothing to answer for his Neighbour's
Sins? what Parents, or Heads of Families,
or Persons in any other Post of Authority,
and intrusted with the Care of others, are
sure they have not either by Words or
Actions, or at least by Neglect, been an Occa-
sion of Sin to those that are committed to
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their Charge? Nay, is there any one that has the Assurance to affirm, that even in the ordinary Commerce of human Life and common Conversation, he has always been so watchful over himself, as never to have prejudiced his Neighbour's Soul by Discourse or Example? I dare boldly call it a Presumption in any Man to make this positive Judgment of himself.

However, since most Christians have but a very weak Idea of this Truth, and seem to be secure enough on that side, I shall in this Entertainment lay before you the many Ways there are of drawing on ourselves the Guilt of other Men's Sins: of which there will be a strict Examination made, and for which we shall be accountable at the great Day of Assizes.

All Sins of Thought, as long as they are stifled within our own Breasts, and are neither manifested by Word nor Action, being incapable of influencing our Neighbour, are purely personal, and consequently foreign to the Subject of this Discourse. But there is not any Sin of the Tongue, nor any sinful Action, but if practised in Company may in some measure be an Occasion of Sin to others, either by being an immediate Inducement, or by preparing at least the remote Dispositions to it. The Reason is, because all sort of Example being of it's
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own Nature an Encouragement to Imitation, as is evident from Experience, it follows, that as good Example is an Inducement to Virtue, so bad Example is naturally an Incentive to Vice, and can never be wholly free from Infection. And therefore as Persons that carry an infectious Distemper about them are apt to communicate it to those they converse with, whether they design it or not; so all sinning in the Presence of others is catching in some Degree, whether it be design'd as a Snare, or done without any such Intention.

Hence it is that those, who are remarkably given to any Vice of the Tongue, as *Cursing and Swearing, Detraction, Prophaneness, or immodest Language*, or are subject to the Sin of *Drunkennes*, have something more to answer for than the bare Guilt of these Sins, consider'd nakedly in themselves. Because all Sins of this sort, being committed in publick, are by Consequence generally attended with the additional Guilt of Scandal, in their being an Encouragement to all that are present, to commit the same. For Men are naturally embolden'd to venture at what they see others do before them. We contract a certain Familiarity with Sin by seeing it often committed: We are wean'd by Degrees from the Horror we had to it. What startled us

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at first, becomes inoffensive by Use, and when we are once reconciled to Vice in others, we have but an easy Step to make to it ourselves. So that whosoever has been much concern'd in the foremention'd Vices, or others that are publick, can never be secure of not having a great deal to answer for on the score of his Neighbour, tho' he never was guilty of expressly soliciting him to sin, or doing any Thing with a premeditated Design to draw him into it. Because he knows not what Mischief his Example alone may have done, how far it may have spread, or what Impression it may have left behind.

However, this Reason holds particularly, when the Example is given by those that are in Authority, or whose Superiority or Station in a Family makes them remarkable. For then it carries a more powerful Malignity, in not only being an Encouragement to Vice, but giving a sort of Credit and Reputation to it. Hence 'tis no wonder that where the Heads of Families are disorderly, the Servants should affect, or at least not fear to be so too: Or that Children, who daily hear their Parents curse and swear, or see them often in Drink, should as they grow up inherit these Vices of them. For considering how prone all Mankind is to Imitation, and particularly
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how apt all Children are to imitate their Parents, as being brought up from their Cradles with a great Esteem and Respect for them, how is it possible but the Example of Parents should have the greatest Influence imaginable upon them, either to Good or Evil.

This Consideration ought to make all Parents wary even to a nicety what they either say or do before their Children; because whatever they say or do carries weight with it. And since the tender Minds of Children are very susceptible of Impressions, and the first Impressions are generally most lasting, especially such as have corrupt Nature to help them to sink the deeper, all Parents that resolve to discharge their Duty, and fully answer the Trust that is lodg'd in them, ought to be careful to set their Children no other Example, than what they may safely follow, nor let them be Witnesses of any Thing, but what may contribute to inspire them with a Sense of Piety and Virtue; and so lead them insensibly into the Way of God's Commandments. For without this Caution they can never be secure of their not having been instrumental to such Miscarriages as may afterwards befall them; or that the Ruin of their Souls, ~~if that should be~~

~~Ruin of their Souls,~~ if that should be their unhappy Lot, be not laid at their Doors.

But to return to my Subject; besides this way of encouraging Sin by Example, I fear all those will scarce be found less criminal, who tho' they give no Scandal in any Part of their own Lives, yet through Neglect or Sloth take no care to prevent the Growth of Sin in others under their Charge. And here again all Parents will be found guilty, who either let their Children grow up without providing them sufficient Instruction, or through excessive Fondness either wholly overlook their Faults, or have not Courage enough to correct those they observe in them.

2dly, all Masters or Mistresses of Families, who either countenance or tolerate Abuses and Irregularities in their Servants, which the Authority they have over them obliges them to remedy by a due and seasonable Method. So that the Persons here mention'd, tho' they may be free from personal Sins, and very edifying in their own Lives, yet by being ill Parents, or careless Masters, may be found guilty, in the sight of God, of the Sins of others, which by their Watchfulness and Care they might and ought to have prevented.

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The severe Punishment inflicted on the high Priest *Heli*, is a terrible Instance of this Truth. For the Scripture does not accuse him of any personal Irregularity : But his Children were guilty of very notorious ones, which gave great Scandal. The Father indeed chid them mildly for it. But out of Fondness natural to Parents had not the Courage to chastise them as their Crime deserved. Whereupon Almighty God first sent a Prophet to denounce to him the Judgments that should befall him and his whole Family ; and soon after reveal'd the same Things to *Samuel*, saying to him, *Behold I will do a Thing in Israel, at which both the Ears of every one that beareth it shall tingle. In that Day I will perform against Heli all the Things which I have spoken concerning his House. When I begin I will make an End. For I have told him that I will judge his House for ever for Iniquity, because he knew that his Sons made themselves vile, and he restrain'd them not. And therefore I have sworn unto the House of HELI, that the Iniquity of HELI'S House shall not be purged with sacrifice, nor Offering, for ever.* This was the Sentence pronounced by God against *HELI* and his Family ; which was soon after executed with the utmost Rigour, and ought to be a Warning to all those who are in Authori-

ty, not to draw upon themselves, by a criminal Connivance or Neglect, the Sins of those whom God has committed to their Charge.

But now, if even those, who but encourage Sin by their Example, or hinder it not when they ought, will be found guilty of their Neighbour's Miscarriages, what a dreadful Load of other Men's Sins do they then heap upon themselves, who are not content to shew them the way of Iniquity, or stand still to see them run headlong into it, but even drag them forcibly to it by commanding, persuading, counselling, soliciting, threatening, or otherwise provoking them to it? These indeed are such profess'd Agents and Ministers of *Satan*, that it is not to be doubted, but as they now serve him in so eminent a Post, so will they hereafter receive their Reward accordingly. They are like those Heads and Ringleaders of Rebellion, who fight not only in Person against their Sovereign, but levy Forces against him; and their Sin, like that *Devil* mention'd by St. *Mark*, may properly be call'd *Legion*. But there being several Degrees of this Sin too foul to be mention'd, I shall only touch upon some few Branches of it, of an inferiour Malice; because these being comparatively less enormous, are slighted by many, and scarce reputed Sins.

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First then, all those are here concern'd, who in Discourse maintain any Principle or Maxim contrary to the Doctrine of the Gospel: Such as is, for Example, the Lawfulness of revenging an Affront. Nor are they less guilty, who applaud them that do it, running out at large in Commendation of their Bravery and Courage; or vilify those, who decline it. For this is nothing less than preaching up Vice to the Company, and exhorting them to practise what is flatly condemn'd by the Laws both of God and Man.

2dly, They that put bad Books into the Hands particularly of young Persons. I mean, Books tending either to Prophaneness, Immodesty, or any other sort of Immorality.

3dly, They who sow Discord, and by carrying Stories to and fro either cause Misunderstandings, or widen Breaches already made. Persons of this Humour are meer Firebrands in a Family, the very Bane of human Society, and deserve to have a Mark of Infamy set upon them, that all may be upon their Guard against them.

4thly, They are guilty, at least in some Degree, who by Flattery and affected Praises contribute to inspire their Neighbour with a vain Conceit of himself, and thereby increase the principal Destructer of
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human Nature. For we all know that Pride is the reigning Disease of Mankind; nay, the Root of all other Evils; and that every one brings but too large a Share of it into the World. We also find sufficiently by Experience, that Flatteries and Praises are the greatest Fomenters of this Vice. Now then, since Charity obliges all Men even to remedy, as far as in them lies, and much more not to augment their Neighbour's Evils, how comes it that in this particular Instance the contrary is everywhere practised without scruple? We applaud, magnify, and extoll him before his Face, and think no harm is done; yet are all the while infusing a most dangerous Poison into him, nourishing his natural Pride, and working him up into an exorbitant Opinion of himself. And is all this no Sin? Truly, if prejudicing our Neighbour in his Body be a Sin, I cannot well see, how wilfully contributing to prejudice his Soul should be an innocent Thing.

5thly, and lastly, Those are undoubtedly guilty of a very grievous Sin of Scandal, who by repeated Importunities press others to drink to Excess, and when they have prevail'd upon their Weakness, triumph as if they returned loaden with the Spoils of a conquered Foe. 'Tis of these *Solomon* tells

tells us, *that they are glad when they have done ill, and rejoice in the most wicked Things.* But what a strange Part is this for a Christian to act ! first to be the wilful Author of his Neighbour's Sin, and then to sport with the Mischief he has done ? Is sinning then a jesting Matter ? is Murdering Souls a Trifle to sport with, and Degrading Men into Beasts a proper Subject of Merriment and Laughter ? This is not only to affront God, by defacing his sacred Image, but looks like insulting over him, and adding Contumely to Impiety.

Besides, who sees not the ill Consequence of making Vice a Matter of Diversion and Mirth ? For can any thing contribute more effectually to lessen the Deformity and Heinousness of it, than to see it play'd and jested with, as if it were nothing more than an ordinary Pastime ? If any one should seriously maintain, that Drunkenness is a becoming Quality, his Discourse would pass for a Satire upon it. But to sport and laugh with it is to plead for it in earnest ; because there needs no more to recommend it, than to make it appear a harmless or indifferent Thing : Now, whatever Men make the Subject of a Jest, is supposed to be so.

Hence I cannot but accuse those of Indiscretion, who when their Friends have been
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disorder'd with Drink, jest as familiarly with them upon that Subject, as if they had only been concerned in some innocent Frolick. Whereas sinning mortally is too serious a Subject to droll upon, and ought either to be seriously reprov'd, or where that Freedom is unseasonable, it is better to be silent than to prejudice the Cause of Virtue by lessening the Deformity of Vice, which all jesting and laughing with it naturally tends to. In a word, it is equally dangerous jesting either with Virtue or Vice: For it does an Injury to the one, and a Credit to the other, by putting them both upon the level with Toys and Trifles.

Now therefore to conclude, since there are so many Ways of drawing on ourselves the Guilt of other Men's Sins, every one has Reason enough to live under a continual Fear of appearing before that dreadful Tribunal, where so severe an Account will be demanded not only of our own but our Neighbour's Transgressions. I own it is very painful to Nature to be always in Fear. But let Nature be uneasy, she may comfort herself with considering, that *Working our Salvation in Fear and Trembling* is advised by St. Paul as the safest Way we can walk in. And the Reason is evident, *First*, because the Fear of God's Judgments is a continual Curb upon corrupt Nature, and renders

renders us watchful not to say or do any thing that may hereafter rise in Judgment against us. And, 2^{dly}, because it is the Mother of Humility, and a sovereign Preservative against those dangerous Suggestions of Vanity, which some may be exposed to on the Score of their pretended Innocence: Those I mean, who not being conscious of any considerable personal Sins, which doubtless is a most signal Blessing, are apt to grow too secure, and even presumptuous of God's Favour; not reflecting that they are perhaps to be accountable for other Men's Actions as well as their own; and that being clear from any considerable personal Sins, they know not how far they may be concern'd in those of their Neighbour.

For tho' perhaps they never have encouraged Sin by their ill Example, are they sure they have not done it by their Connivance, Silence, or Neglect? Tho' they never push'd nor dragg'd their Neighbour to the Precipice, have they always been watchful to draw him from it, when they could and ought to do it? Have they never flatter'd his Pride and Vanity for private Ends? have they never encouraged Detraction by shewing a Satisfaction to hear it, nor broach'd Discourses with Design to have some one brought upon the Stage? Finally, have they not by their vain and worldly Discourses

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contributed to inspire their Neighbour with a Love of the World and it's dangerous Pleasures? Now, if they cannot with a full Assurance plead not guilty to any of these Articles, what have they else to do but humble themselves daily under the omnipotent Hand of God, and, throwing themselves wholly upon his infinite Mercies, beseech him with the *Royal Prophet* not to charge them with the Guilt of other Men's Sins. And less than this no Christian can do without Danger of Presumption.

But they who have been notoriously guilty of propagating Vice in any kind whatsoever, whether by Persuasion or Example; have something else to do. For there is also a Reparation and Atonement due to their Neighbour whom they have injured by their Scandal; and the best Reparation they can make is to do what they can to become now as serviceable to Virtue as they have once been to Vice. And how must this be done but by being now as edifying in their Lives, as they were scandalous before; by shewing upon all Occasions their Abhorrence of their former Sins, and by promoting every where, both by Discourse and Example, particularly the Virtues opposite to those Vices for which they have formerly been most remarkable, and whereby they have chiefly prejudiced their Neighbour.

bour. For by this Method the Satisfaction will bear some Proportion to the Injustice done. And they will have Reason to hope that Almighty God, who is infinite in Mercy as well as Justice, seeing their earnest Desire, and hearty Endeavours to make the best amends they can for what is past, and finding them as zealous now in his Cause, as they were once Enemies to it, will look upon them with Compassion, cancel the great Debt they had contracted, both by their own and Neighbour's Sins, and reverse the Sentence he had decreed against them.

The XIIIth ENTERTAINMENT. OF HELL.

Of the Pain of *Sense* in General.

Every Tree which bringeth not forth good Fruit shall be cut down, and cast into the Fire, Matt. iii. 10.

HAVING already gone through the most important Truths relating to *Death* and *Judgment*, I shall now begin to speak of the Punishments and Rewards of the Life to come. Concerning which I shall be careful not to advance any thing but what is either grounded upon the Word of God, or taught by Divines, or drawn from Principles which seem to be beyond Dispute. But I shall first premise a Reflection, which appears
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necessary in relation to such reveal'd Truths as are above our Comprehension, and which according to the elegant Figure of *St. Paul*, *we see but in Part, and in a Glass darkly*, 1. Cor. xiii. 12. amongst which are the two reveal'd Truths concerning the Punishments and Rewards of the Life to come.

Now in handling Truths of this nature, it is impossible to carry our Expressions up to what they really are. The very ablest Pen or Tongue can no more represent them as they are in themselves, than the most skilful Painter can set forth the vast and beautiful Orb of the Sun in its full natural Proportion and Lustre. For our Words can at best but keep Pace with our Thoughts, but never go beyond them. We cannot express more than we can conceive. And therefore, since the Nature of those Truths is above the Reach of human Understanding; since as *St. Paul* tells us, they can only be conceived *in Part, and as in a Glass darkly*, it follows, that even when they are set forth to their greatest Advantage, they are only express'd in the same dark and imperfect Manner: and by Consequence, whatever Strength of Words and Ornaments of Eloquence are employed to represent such Truths, we must always form this Judgment, that they are infinitely greater in themselves than they are represented: because the Ideas we have of them
come

come undoubtedly very short of their real Objects; and our Expressions being but the painting of our Ideas, and, as it were, second-hand Copies of the Objects themselves, must needs represent them at least as imperfectly as they are conceived in our Thoughts.

This Reflection therefore must be carried on through every Part of the Subject I am now entering upon. The Word of God itself tells us of the Joys of Heaven, *that the Eye has not seen, neither has the Ear heard, nor has it enter'd into the Heart of Man, what God has prepared for those that love him.* And the same must be said of the Pains of Hell prepared for them that live and die in the State of Sin. It is impossible to conceive, much less to express, either the one or the other. Our Faith must supply the Defect of our Understanding, and convince us, that as no Joy or Pleasure of this World can bear any Proportion to that of the blessed Souls in Heaven, so the acutest Pains that ever were or can be endured, in this Life, are but imaginary ones, and not worth speaking of, if compared with the Torments of the Damn'd in Hell.

I shall begin with these according to the Method of spiritual Writers, who usually consider them under two general Heads, call'd by Divines the *Pain of Sense*, and the *Pain of Loss*. Under the first Head are
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contain'd all Evils that affect the Senses; and under the second all interiour Pains of the Soul caused by *Grief, Anguish, Despair, Shame, Hatred, Envy*, and the *violent Cravings* of Passions never to be satisfied. I shall now speak only of the *Pain of Sense* in general; and since a Person dying in the State of Sin is from that very Instant condemn'd to *Hell-fire*, which causes the most grievous Pain of that Sort, I shall endeavour to shew that a damn'd Soul suffers the Pain of Sense independently of the Re-union of the Body; and is by Consequence the Fuel of *Hell-fire* as well before as after the general Resurrection; which shall be the Subject of this Entertainment.

According to the vulgar Way of thinking, we are apt to fancy that we should easily form some Idea of the *Pain of Sense*, if the Soul immediately after Death were again united to the Body. But we have a Difficulty to conceive how this Sort of Pain is consistent with the State of Separation. For the Pain of Sense is no other, than that which we suffer by all or some one of our five Senses, and how can the Soul be capable of Sensation, when she is stript of all the natural Organs of her Senses? Can she see without Eyes, hear without Ears, feel without Flesh and Blood, and so forth? But this Difficulty is chiefly
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owing to a Want of true Ideas of the different Natures of the Soul and Body, the two Parts whereof Man is compos'd.

First then, as to the Body, we must consider, that this Part of Man, even whilst it is inform'd and animated by the Soul, is nothing but *meer Matter*, as having been originally form'd of Earth; and *meer Matter* can never be a Principle of *Life* any more than a Log of Wood, nor by Consequence of *Sensation*. But the Soul is a spiritual Substance created immediately by the Hand of God, and is itself the sole Principle both of *Sensation* and *Reason*. Hence both spiritual and scholastick Writers conceive two different Parts in the Soul; one of which they call the *inferior* or *sensitive* Part; the other, the *superior* or *rational* Part; which is a manifest Proof of their attributing *Sensation* as well as *Reasoning* to the Soul alone. However, their Meaning is not that there are two Parts really distinct in the Soul, but only two different Denominations attributed to the same spiritual Substance, as she is the Root or Principle both of *sensitive* and *intellectual* Operations in whatever State she be, and whether she acts in Conjunction with or separately from the Body.

'Tis true, Almighty God has order'd human Nature so, that the Soul, during her
State

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State of Union in this Life shall be incapable of any Exercise either of her intellectual or sensitive Faculties without the Ministry of the Body ; so that as a Man can neither think nor reason without Brains, so neither can she *see*, nor *bear*, nor *feel*, nor *taste*, nor *smell*, without the respective *Organs* made by the Author of Nature to be subservient to these *sensitive* Operations.

But tho' the Soul be thus made to depend upon the Ministry of the Body, and is without it unable in this World to exert herself in any Functions of Life, whether *Sensation* or *Reason*, yet this is but an accidental Condition of her present State, but no Part of her Essence. For the Soul is essentially a spiritual Substance, unalterable in her Nature, and the several Parts of the Body are but her Tools and Instruments to work with in this Life. When that is ended, she changes not her Essence, but her State ; as a Man who throws off his Cloaths or Shackles, is the same human Nature he was before. And therefore as the Soul, whilst united to the Body, is by her Essence and Nature the sole Principle not only of *intellectual* but of all *vital* and *sensitive* Operations ; since the Body only furnishes the material Organs adapted to her present State of Conjunction with it ; it follows, that after their Separation, whilst the Body, according

to its corruptible Nature returns to Earth, the Soul cannot but continue to be what she is by Essence, the same Source and Principle both of *Reason* and *Sensation*.

This is manifest as to the *Intellectual* Part of the Soul, since both Philosophers and Divines agree, that her intellectual Powers act with much greater Strength and Vivacity in her State of Separation, than they can possibly do under the Clog and Incumbrances of the Body. The same is no less evident as to the Sense of *Feeling*. For no Man of sound Principles doubts, but that a damned Soul is tormented by *Hell-fire* from the very Instant of her Condemnation; and it is manifested from the Words of the *rich Glutton* in Hell. But if the Soul separated from the Body had no Sense of *Feeling*, *Hell-fire* could not torment her. For let it be never so violent or active in it's Nature, it cannot be a Cause of Pain, unless it acts upon a Subject that can feel it: And therefore, since there is no Reason to doubt but that a Soul separated from the Body has a Sense of *Feeling*, there seems to be as little Reason to doubt, but that sensitive Powers, namely, those of *hearing, seeing, smelling, and tasting*, are likewise inseparable from her Essence; tho' their respective Functions be doubtless performed after a different Manner

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Manner according to the Difference of her immaterial and incorruptible State, into which she enters immediately after her Dissolution.

So that if any one asks me, how the Soul can *see* without *Eyes*, or *hear* without *Ears*, and of the rest; I answer him, by asking likewise, how she can *think*, *understand*, and *reason* without Brains? since there appears no greater Difficulty in the one than in the other. In effect, all the Difficulty that appears, arises wholly from an Error of Imagination in attributing that to the Body, which really belongs to the Soul, when they are united together. For we imagine the Organs of the Senses to be the Senses themselves, which I conceive to be a great Mistake. The Organs of Sensation are indeed in the Body, but the Sensation itself is in the Soul. And tho' according to the vulgar way of speaking we say that the Eyes see, and the Ears hear, yet the *Eyes* and *Ears* are no more the Senses of *seeing* and *hearing*, than the Windows, through which the Light passes, are the Light itself; for the true Meaning of it is no other, than that the Ideas of the respective Objects of *Sight* and *Hearing* are conveyed to the Soul through the Eyes and Ears, as the Light of the Sun is convey'd to us through the Windows.

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'Tis true indeed, that, according to the Condition of the Soul in this Life, material Objects cannot make Impressions upon us, nor affect us either with Pain or Pleasure, otherwise than by making their way to the Soul by the Ministry of the corporeal Organs: But the radical Source itself both of Seeing, Hearing, and other Sensations, which are all Operations of Life, is inherent in the Soul alone, is a Part of her very Substance, and so imbibed in her Nature as to be inseparable from it.

This is not all ; but we must farther observe, that the Soul, whilst she is united to, and acts in Conjunction with the Body, is by all spiritual Writers consider'd as under a State of *Confinement*. The Body is usually call'd her *Prison*, and all those numberless organical Parts, on which she depends, both in her sensitive and intellectual Capacity, are to be consider'd no otherwise than as so many *Chains* or *Shackles*, which cramp her natural Powers, and hinder them from exerting themselves with their full Vivacity and Strength. They are indeed of necessary Use with relation to her present State ; but 'tis like the Use of Crutches to a Cripple. For the Soul united to the Body cannot indeed move or act without them ; as a Cripple during his State of Infirmary cannot walk without Crutches. But her State of

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Union is a State of Weakness, and, as long as it lasts, all the Motions and Operations of the Soul are lame, weak, and languid. But as a Cripple restored to the natural Use of his Limbs moves with much greater Strength and Swiftmess, than whilst he is confined to Crutches; so when the Soul is deliver'd by Death from the Chains and Incumbrance of the Body, all her Powers are, as it were, set at liberty: She acts without Restraint, and exerts herself with the utmost Extent of her natural Force. Her Understanding is enlarged, to give her a full Knowledge of her eternal State, and of every thing that contributes to render it happy or unhappy. All her Ideas are clear and distinct; because the Objects that excite them meet with no Interposition of Matter to clog or weaken the Impressions they make upon her. They act upon her immediately without being obliged to force their Way through Flesh and Blood to come at her; so that all her Sensations and Movements are attended with an Acuteness and Violence far superiour to what she can have in this World; and (if I may be allow'd to make use of a familiar Comparison) we may truly say, that as Blows are more sensible and painful to a naked Body, than to one cover'd with thick Cloaths, so the

Pains

Pains of a Soul stripped naked of the Body are infinitely more acute and violent than any she can here endure under the gross and material Cover of Flesh and Blood.

From these Reflections it follows, that by a wonderful providential Disposition of divine Justice, every Part or Faculty of the Soul will, even in her State of Separation, be a distinct Source of some accidental Increase of Punishment or Reward, according as it has been a Source of virtuous or sinful Actions in this Life ; and all her sensitive as well as intellectual Powers will have their Share of Torment or Pleasure exactly proportion'd to the Sins or Virtues, of which they were made Instruments upon Earth.

I will not indeed pretend to explain either the particular Manner, how the Soul exerts her sensitive Powers in her State of Separation, or the Nature of the Objects that work upon her or the Manner how they affect her either with Pain or Pleasure. For tho' the Knowledge of these Things might serve to gratify our Curiosity, they are not necessary for our Instruction, or clearer Information of the Truth ; it suffices, in this as well as many other Cases, to know that it is a Truth, grounded upon solid Principles of Reason. But the *How*, or Manner of it is a Subject of meer barren Speculation,

and nothing to the main Purpose : It suffices, for Example, to be convinced, that a damn'd Soul separated from the Body is tormented by Hell-fire, and that by Consequence she feels the Violence and Activity of the Flames that torment her ; but as to the Nature of Hell-fire, as whether it be true elemental Fire, or of a different Sort from what we know in this World ; or as to the Manner how it acts upon a spiritual Substance, or how a Soul unorganized can be a proper Fuel for it ; these are meer Amusements of human Curiosity, and indeed above the Reach of our Understanding.

Nay, we are almost as much in the dark concerning the Manner how we *see*, *hear*, or *feel* in this Life ; for the very wisest Men differ in their Opinions about it : Some say we *see* by the Emission of Rays from the Eyes ; others explain it by the Reception of Species from the Objects ; and there is the same Uncertainty about the Manner of Sensation of all the other Senses ; and indeed all we are sure of is, that we see with our Eyes, hear with our Ears, and so of the rest. And therefore, as it would be a Madness to doubt of it, because we know not how to explain it, so none but Madmen can doubt of Hell-fire, or the Grievousness of the Torment it causes in
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damn'd Souls, because we cannot comprehend the *How*, or Manner of it. I heartily pray God we may never come to be made sensible of it by an experimental Knowledge.

But what I have said concerning the Nature of Man's Soul seems to amount to a convincing Proof that the *Pain of Sense* in a damn'd Soul is the same in both her States after this Life ; that is, as well before as after the Re-union of the Body ; and this I find conformable to the Sentiment of all spiritual Writers upon this Subject ; who in explaining the Pain of Sense, never give the least Hint, as if the proper Pain of any of the Senses were suspended to the general Resurrection ; on the contrary, their usual Method is to be very particular in specifying all the different Torments of the five Senses, and appropriating to each one, a Punishment suitable to the Nature of the Sins, whereof it has been an Instrument in this Life ; and this without mentioning any Difference between her State of Separation from, or Re-union to the Body, or exempting a damn'd Soul from any sensible Pain in one State, with which she is to be tormented in the other.

In effect, whoever allows the Soul to have a Sense of Feeling in her State of Separation, must allow her all her other Senses, since there is the same Reason for all as
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for one: And therefore since it is above all Question, that one Part of her Pain of Sense, *viz.* her Burning in Hell, commences from the very Instant of her Condemnation; there is likewise no Reason to doubt but that all the other Senses have their Share of Torment assigned them from the very same Moment. And this seems also to be most conformable to that exact Equality of Justice, which God exercises in the other World.

For the very Moment that a Person expires, he ceases to be in a State of meriting or demeriting; that is, from that Moment he cannot do any Thing to deserve the least Increase or Diminution either of Punishment or Reward: That very Moment also his Sentence is pronounced, which being infinitely just must by Consequence be exactly proportion'd to the Number and Quality of all his past Sins or Virtues; allowing likewise for all their Consequences, of which God has a perfect Knowledge. If therefore the Punishment of a Person condemn'd to Hell-fire were augmented after the general Resurrection by some additional Pain of Sense, it would follow, that it would then either exceed the Measure of his past Sins, or not come fully up to it in the whole Interval betwixt his Death, and the great Day of general Judgment.

Judgment. And since this seems to be inconsistent with the most obvious Notion of an infinite Justice, we must conclude that the *Pain of Sense*, as well as that of *Loss*, is in its full Measure allotted to every damn'd Soul at her very first Plunge into Hell-fire ; and that, tho' after the Re-union of the Body, the Manner of it may be different (concerning which we are wholly in the dark) the Substance and Violence of her Pains are as fix'd and unchangeable as her eternal State.

Let us beseech Almighty God to grant us the Spirit of true Penance in this Life, particularly in the Mortification of our Senses. The dangerous Liberties, and unlawful Pleasures we allow them now, will cost us very dear hereafter : But if we labour to subdue them in this Life ; if we subject them to the Government of Reason, and make them subservient to Virtue, they will also be Partakers of the incomprehensible Joys prepared for us in the Life to come.

The XIVth ENTERTAINMENT.

A particular Account of the *Pain of Sense*.

Cast him into outer Darkness: There shall be Weeping, and Gnashing of Teeth.
Matt. xxii. 13.

IN my last Discourse I entertain'd you with some general Considerations relating to the *Pain of Sense*; I shall now proceed to give you a more particular Account of it; and this shall be the Subject of this Entertainment.

That Part of the Punishment of the Damn'd, which is call'd the *Pain of Sense*, is principally caused by the Nature of the *Place*, where the damn'd Souls are imprison'd, and the unquenchable *Flames*, to which they are condemn'd.

As to the *Place* assign'd them for their eternal Abode, which we call *Hell*, it is unquestionably under Ground, and very probably in the very Center or Bowels of the Earth. St. *John* in his *Revelations* calls it the *Lake of God's Wrath*: The Prophet *Isaiab* calls it *Tophet*, and gives this frightful Description of it. *From Eternity,*
says

says he, is *Tophet* prepared by the King (meaning Almighty God) he has made it deep and large: The Pile thereof is Fire and much Wood. The Breath of the Lord like a Stream of Brimstone doth kindle it. And holy Job calls it a Land of Darkneſs cover'd with the gloomy Shade of Death, where no Order, but eternal Horror and Confuſion dwelleth.

Now theſe Deſcriptions are moſtly ſuitable to the Nature of a ſubterraneous Place, or Priſon under Ground. *Deepneſs* denotes its Situation; and *Darkneſs*, *Confuſion* and *Horror* are the natural Conſequences of it. There are beſides, many other Expreſſions in holy Writ, which favour this Belief; as that of the Pſalmiſt, *let them deſcend alive into Hell*. And 'tis related of the rich Glutton, *that he died and was buried in Hell*: Which Expreſſions, viz. *Deſcending into*, and being *buried in Hell*, naturally form in us an Idea of a Place beneath the Surface of the Earth, and far diſtant from the Seat of *Blis*.

Of which we have ſtill a farther Inſinuation in the Words of our *Creed*; tho' the *Hell* there ſpoken of be very different from that of the Damn'd: The Words I mean are theſe: *He deſcended into Hell: The third Day he roſe again, aſcended*

into Heaven, &c. For a Person cannot properly be said to *descend* but from a higher Place to a lower; nor to *ascend* but from a lower Place to one respectively higher: So that the Surface of the Earth is here represented as in a middle Situation between the Region of Darkness below, and the Mansions of eternal Light above: And since we cannot doubt but these are full as opposite in their Situation as Nature, we may confidently say, that the Heaven of the blessed Souls is the very highest, and the Hell of the Damn'd the very lowest Part of the whole Creation: And that as the Elevation of the one will give an Increase of accidental Glory to the Elect, so will the Lowness of the other cause an Addition of Torment and Confusion in the Reprobate.

But the Reason; whence it chiefly appears, that the *Hell of the Damn'd* is not only a Place under Ground, but in the very lowest Caverns of the Earth, is, because the *Hell*, into which *Christ* descended, was a subterraneous Place, as I have already remark'd; and according to these Words of the Apostle, *For who is he who ascended, but he who descended first into the lower Parts of the Earth?* And yet the Hell of the Damn'd is still much lower than this, as appears from the History or Parable

Parable of the *rich Glutton*, who demanding of *Abraham* a Drop of Water to cool his Tongue, was answer'd by him, that there was a great Gulph or Space betwixt them, which debar'd the Damn'd from receiving, and him from sending any Comfort from the Place where he and *Lazarus* made their Abode ; which doubtless was the Hell, or *Prison* of the Saints of the old Law, into which our Saviour Christ descended in order to release those holy Captives, whom he had ransom'd with his sacred Blood, of which the unhappy Glutton could receive no Benefit ; because *in Hell* (namely, *the Hell of the Damn'd*) *there is no Redemption.*

If you ask how Man's Soul, which is a spiritual Substance, can be confined to, or imprison'd in a material Place ; I answer, that there is no more Difficulty to conceive the Soul imprison'd in a *material Place*, than to conceive her imprison'd in a *material Body*. We all know that the Body is the *Prison* of the Soul in this Life : And the Body is originally but Earth turn'd into Flesh, which after Death returns into Earth. So that a Soul condemn'd to Hell is but removed from one earthly Prison to another ; that is, from a Prison above Ground, where Goods and Evils, Joys and Sorrows, Pleasures and Pains, are continually interwoven, to one under Ground, where a dread-

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dreadful Aggregation of all imaginable Evils is to be her everlasting Portion.

For in the Prison of this World she sees the beautiful Light of the Sun, is refresh'd by the Air, and enjoys the Comfort of the other Elements: Her Senses are entertain'd with many agreeable Objects, her Sorrows are alleviated by the Company of Friends, her Cares diverted by a great Variety of Amusements, and the Repose of Night not only suspends her Labours, but supplies her with new Strength to support them. But in the Prison of the other World every thing contributes to torment her: The very Depth and Darkness of the Place affects her with Horror. She has all the Pain of a Person buried alive, and stifled under the Weight of the Earth, without the Power of Dying; the Extremities both of Heat and Cold, the Apparitions of frightful Spectres, the Gnawings of Serpents and other venomous Creatures according to St. *Austin*; finally, the confused Noise of Curses and Blasphemies, Howlings and Lamentations are the everlasting Entertainment of her Senses; without the least Interval of Repose, without a Friend to comfort her, or any Change of Objects to divert her from her Torments.

So that we must conceive the Hell of the Damn'd to be a dreadful Dungeon separated from

from all Light and Air by the whole Thickness of the Earth, which immures it, as it were, on every Part: A Dungeon fill'd with Horror, Filth, and noisome Stenches, and impenetrable to all Relief. In a Word, a Dungeon, where those unfortunate Criminals are to be kept Prisoners for all Eternity; where they will be the everlasting Objects of God's Wrath, the eternal Victims of his Justice, the Hatred and Aversion of Saints and Angels, and the Scorn and Derision of their implacable Tormenters.

But of all the Pains of Sense, that which is caused by Hell-fire is the most grievous; and the Truth of it is so authentically attested in holy Writ, that no Man of sound Principles can doubt of it. *Fire and Brimstone* (says the Royal Prophet) *shall be a Part of their Cup. Their Worm* (says *Isaiab*) *shall never die, and their Fire shall never be quenched: Whoever* (says *St. John* in his Revelations) *was not found written in the Book of Life, was thrown into a Pool of Fire:* And the holy Baptist made use of no other Argument to induce his Auditors to embrace the Baptism of Penance he preach'd. *The Axe* (says he) *is already laid to the Root: Therefore every Tree that brings not forth good Fruit shall be cut down, and cast into the Fire. He will gather* (speaking

of our Saviour) *his Wheat into his Grainery, but he will burn the Chaff with unquenchable Fire.* All which is confirm'd by Christ himself, saying, that in the last Day he will pronounce this terrible Sentence against the Reprobate, *Go ye accursed into everlasting Fire, which is prepared for the Devil and his Angels.*

Can any thing be clearer and stronger than these Expressions of holy Writ? Which therefore the Fathers, and other spiritual Writers ever understood in their obvious and literal Sense; and they always took care to inculcate, that the Fire prepared for Sinners is a true and real Fire; which they therefore call the chief Minister of God's Wrath, the Avenger of his Cause, the principal Agent, Instrument and Executioner of the divine Justice. And *St. Austin* sticks not to say, that the Fire of this World, compared to that of Hell, is no more than a *painted Fire.*

Now of all sensible Pains, that which is caused by Fire even in this World is generally esteem'd one of the most violent and insupportable. All Men have a strong and lively Apprehension of it: Insomuch that there is scarce any Death we naturally dread more than to be burnt alive, especially by a slow Fire; which therefore never is inflicted but for the most enormous Crimes, or by Tyrants, who have lost all Sense of
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Humanity. Would any one here present have the Courage to hold his Hand for one half Hour upon a burning Coal, tho' he were to gain a Kingdom by it? I dare say there is not any one, tho' never so poor, but would rather chuse to continue what he is, than purchase a Change of Condition at so dear a Rate. And therefore we justly admire the heroick Virtue of St. *Lawrence*, who, whilst he lay broiling on a Gridiron, jested with his Tormenters, and seem'd insensible of the Pain he endured. But Nature had no Share in this Action, and would doubtless have sunk under the excessive Violence of the Pain, had not the invincible Power of divine Grace render'd him victorious over it.

If then the Fire, even of this World, causes a Pain so grievous and intolerable, that no Man would upon any worldly Consideration endure the Violence of it for any Space of Time, how shall we find Words to express the Grievousness of the Pain which the Damn'd endure amidst the scorching Flames of Hell! since all spiritual Writers affirm positively, that the Violence and Activity of Hell-fire surpasses beyond all Imagination that of any Fire in this World! Truly, we may say without Exaggeration, that even the *Babylonian Furnace*, tho' kindled seven times more than usually, was rather

ther a refreshing Gale than burning Fire, if compared with the Flames of Hell; and that St. *Lawrence's* Gridiron would be a Bed of Roses to a damn'd Soul.

The Reason of this terrible Difference is partly the Nature of Hell-fire itself, considered as an Instrument of divine Justice, and partly the Nature or Condition of the Subject upon which it acts. As to the first, *viz.* the Nature of Hell-fire consider'd as an *Instrument of divine Justice*, we must observe, that whereas Fire in this World was principally ordained by God to *comfort, warm, and refresh*; Hell-fire was on the contrary kindled by him for no other Use, than to *burn and torment*. And since there is not any Part of the whole Creation, that comes within our Knowledge, but is by his infinite Wisdom perfectly adapted to the peculiar Use for which it is ordain'd, and endow'd with a Nature suitable to the Part it has to act in serving the Designs of Providence, we have Reason to conclude that the same infinite Wisdom has also given to Hell-fire such a Nature and Qualities, as fully answer the Ends for which they are made; which being no other than to punish and torment the Wicked with the utmost Rigour, it is not to be question'd but Almighty God has communicated to it an Impetuosity and Violence, which sur-
passes

passes every thing in this World, and is most lively express'd by the Prophet *Isaiab*, saying, that Hell-fire is blown upon and kindled by the Breath of the Lord. To which St. *Austin* likewise alludes, when he says that Hell-fire burns marvelously but truly, *miris sed veris modis*.

God is indeed marvelous in all his Works. But we may truly say, that of all his Works, none appear more wonderful than his boundless Liberality in Heaven, and the Rigour of his Justice in Hell. In Heaven he rewards like a God, and in Hell he punishes like a God. In Heaven he bestows Blessings without Measure, and in Hell he inflicts Torments without Mercy. His infinite Wisdom and Power are employ'd in Heaven to make the blessed Souls compleatly happy in all the Demonstrations of his infinite Goodness, and they are no less employ'd in Hell to make the damn'd Souls smart under the Rigour of his Justice. And whereas all God's Works in this World are a Mixture of *Justice* and *Mercy*, in the Life to come they are all pure Justice in relation to the Reprobate: For in this Life indeed, when he chastises, he does it with the Tenderneſs of a loving Father; but in the Life to come he punishes the Reprobate like an irreconcilable Enemy that takes Revenge, or like a Judge
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that treats a Criminal according to the Rigour of the Law, which made holy *Job*, tho' his Sufferings were so great, that he seem'd utterly abandon'd by God, express his Condition by only saying that *the Hand of the Lord had touch'd him*, because the very severest Sufferings in this World are but, as it were, some *gentle Touches* of the Hand of God; whereas he makes the Reprobate in Hell feel the whole Weight of his terrible Hand, giving his Wrath its full Scope, and pouring forth his Indignation upon them like an impetuous Torrent. So that we may consider Hell-fire as a dreadful Instrument of Execution in the Hands of an incensed and implacable God, revenging himself with it according to the full Impetuosity and Violence of its Nature.

But the second Reason of the excessive Torment it causes, is the Nature or Quality of the Subject upon which it acts. For, in the first Place, there is nothing in the Damn'd that can any way resist or weaken its Activity: And Therefore the Word of God compares them to *dry Wood, Stubble, or Straw*; because Fire meets with little or no Resistance in Things of this Nature; as is evident from Experience. Now 'tis certain, that the less the Resistance is of the Subject, to which Fire is applied, the greater is the Impetuosity and Violence, with
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which it acts upon it : And consequently where there is no Resistance at all, it acts upon it with its full Force.

But the Incorruptableness of the Damn'd is another frightful Circumstance, which may help to give us some Idea of the excessive Violence of their Torments. For in this World, all Manner of Pain is limited by the Mortality and Weakness of our Bodies ; because whenever any Pain exceeds a certain Degree or Measure of Violence, beyond what Nature can bear, it utterly destroys us. But in Hell, Things are not so ; because the most excessive Torments can neither destroy nor alter the Subject upon which Hell-fire acts. And therefore as the Pains of the Damn'd will be without End, because the Subject will never be destroy'd, so will they also be without Diminution or Abatement, because the Incorruptableness of their State renders them incapable of Change. So that after Millions of Millions of Years pass'd in those fiery Dungeons, and Furnaces of unquenchable Flames, the Damn'd will have as quick and feeling a Sense of the Fire, as they had the very first Moment. In a word, all their Torments, tho' violent beyond Expression or Imagination, will continue in their full Degree of Violence as long as Hell-fire shall last ; which will be for all Eternity ; ever burning without consuming.

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consuming, ever tormenting without altering or destroying any Part of the miserable Fuel upon which it acts.

I need not add any more, but leave every one to reflect, whether, considering the continual Uncertainty of human Life, we act not like Madmen if we continue for any Time in a State, from which if Death carries us to the other World, we are sure to pass to the dreadful Torments I have described. Let us beseech Almighty God to preserve us from this Blindness, and give us Grace to live so, that a happy Eternity may be our Reward.

The Fifteenth ENTERTAINMENT.

Of the Pain of Loss.

Their Worm dieth not, and their Fire is not quenched.

Mark ix. 43.

BY the *Worm*, which *dieth not*, is meant the everlasting Sting and Gnawing of Conscience, and the Anguish and Despair of a damn'd Soul, caused by the unhappy State into which she is fallen. For the better Understanding whereof, we must consider

der that a Man's Soul is created to be happy, And since all Creatures have a natural Tendency to the End for which they are created, it follows that a general Inclination to Happiness is so imbibed in the Nature of the Soul, whatever State she be in, that it is inseparable from it. In effect, the principal View Men have in all the Hurry and Business of Life, is no other than to make themselves as happy as they can. And whether Honour, Interest, or Pleasure be the immediate Object of their Pursuits, Happiness is the principal and ultimate End they drive at.

This Inclination therefore, being inseparable from the very Nature and Essence of Man's Soul, not only follows her to the other World, but by her being then disengaged from the Incumbrance of Flesh and Blood, becomes far more violent and craving: And by Consequence, if a Soul at her Separation from the Body finds herself utterly deprived of the Happiness after which she thirsts, the same Inclination, which, if gratified in the Possession of an infinite Good, would have render'd her infinitely happy, renders her infinitely miserable in the Loss of it, and becomes a perpetual Food of the *Worm, which dieth not*; I mean, of that terrible Part of her Punishment, which Divines call the Pain
of

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of Loss, and which I intend to explain in this Entertainment.

Tho' the Picture I have hitherto drawn of Hell be very frightful, it represents but one half and the milder Part of the Punishment of a damn'd Soul; since Divines generally agree, that the Pain of *Loss* is far more grievous than that of *Sense*. This Pain consists principally in the violent Impressions of Grief made upon the Soul for the Loss of Heaven, and the unhappy State into which she is fallen. Now whoever has at any time been under any great Oppression and Load of Grief, will at least be sensible, that the Pain of the Mind is a very grievous Torment, and suffices alone to render a Person unhappy, tho' the Body be perfectly at ease. So that there is this great Difference between the Sufferings of the Mind, and those of the Body, that tho' the Body be never so much afflicted, a chearful and easy Mind gives it Relief. But a Heart oppress'd with Grief feels the whole Weight of its Affliction, which, even in this World, where the Objects that excite it are usually inconsiderable in themselves, becomes notwithstanding many times so heavy and insupportable, that many have laid violent Hands on themselves to be deliver'd from it.

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But the strongest Proof that can be given of the violent Pain, which Grief alone can cause in the Soul, is our Saviour's Agony in the Garden of *Gethsemini*; where he suffer'd himself to be seiz'd with the heaviest Load of Grief, that ever fell upon any mortal Man: Inſomuch that many Writers are of Opinion, that it was the moſt painful Part of all his Sufferings; and Chriſt himſelf made this Declaration of it, *that his Soul was ſorrowful even unto Death*: That is, the Grief that oppreſs'd his Heart was ſo great, that had he not miraculoſly preſerved himſelf for the Death of the Croſs, Nature could not have ſubſiſted under the Weight of it. But tho' he had not expreſs'd it in Words, the extraordinary Effect it wrought upon his ſacred Body, by throwing him into a Sweat of Blood, would have been a convincing Proof of the Violence of his Pain.

I have produced this, only as an Inſtance to convince us, that the interiour Pain of the Soul, in which the Senſes have no Share, may be a very grievous Suffering: 'Tis true indeed there never was, nor ever can be any Grief in this World equal to what our Saviour ſuffer'd; becauſe the Ideas that excited it were infinitely clearer and ſtronger than any other mortal Man is capable of. But there is a large Difference

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between what a Man is capable of in this Life, and the Grief of a damn'd Soul; whereof there appear three principal Roots or Causes. *First*, the unmix'd Nature of the afflicting Objects, which excite and nourish the Passions of a damn'd Soul. *2dly*, the clear Ideas she has of those afflicting Objects. And, *3dly*, the Unchangeableness of her Nature, when she enters into her eternal State. I shall touch briefly upon each.

First then, the Objects, that occasion her Grief in this Life, are either inconsiderable Trifles, or imaginary Evils, or if real ones, are never without some Mixture of Comfort, and may be regarded on their favourable Side: For there is scarce a temporal Evil, but is counterbalanced by some Good to support an afflicted Mind: If we lose one Friend, others remain to make up the Loss in some measure. If we be hated by some, greater Number have a Kindness, or at least an Indifference for us: When one Part of the Body is in Pain, the rest may be at ease; and so it is proportionably in all the Sufferings of this Life: No Man's Case is so utterly destitute and forlorn, as to be under a total Privation of all Comfort to alleviate his Grief.

But Matters are not so in the other World.
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The Loss of Heaven, in regard of a damn'd Soul, is an infinite and universal Loss: A Loss, which excludes all Mixture of Good, and comprehends an Aggregation of all Evils. For a damn'd Soul is deprived of every thing she desires, and condemn'd to every thing she abhors. She is tormented in all her Powers and Senses. She is hated by all, and pitied by none; hated not only by God and all his Saints and Angels, but even by those who are to be the everlasting Companions of her Torments. So that, what Way soever she turns herself, she sees no Object before her but what is a real and substantial Evil: No Object but what is an everlasting Source of Pain: Finally, no Object but what contributes to heighten her Grief.

But the clear and full Knowledge, which a Soul, separated from the Body, has of all those afflicting Objects, is a second terrible Circumstance, which raises her Grief, and other painful Passions, to the highest pitch of Violence: The Body in this World is as a dead Weight upon the Soul; all her Ideas of Things both temporal and eternal are extremely weaken'd and obscured by it; and the Extent of her Understanding is reduced within a very narrow Compass, as we plainly experience, in this Life. But she is no sooner disengaged from the Clog
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and Encumbrance of the Body, but the dark Mist, that hung before her is dissipated in a Moment. She's like a Person starting out of a profound Sleep: Her Understanding is enlarged to a prodigious Degree; and her Ideas depending now no more on a deluded Imagination, or the deceitful Information of sensitive Organs, are all clear and distinct, in relation to every thing that contributes to her Happiness or Torment. And what a dreadful Load of Grief will this cast upon a reprobate Soul, when all the Circumstances of her unhappy State, all the Causes of it, which depended upon her own free Will, and irreparable Consequences that attend it, are all clearly represented before her Eyes!

The Force of this Consequence will appear evident, if we consider, that the Passion of Grief, and other painful Passions, are all but so many violent Movements and Agitations in the Soul, excited by the Ideas of such Objects as are disagreeable to us. For as we can neither *love* nor *desire* any Thing, but as we conceive it to be some *Good*, so can we neither *bate* nor *fear* any Thing, nor *grieve* for it, unless we regard it as an *Evil*. And, by Consequence, the clearer our Ideas are of the Objects which excite our Passions, the more violent are the Movements or Agitations,
which

which they cause in the Soul: As, on the contrary, weak Ideas, even of Objects of the most weighty Consequence, make but weak Impressions on the Soul; as will appear beyond Dispute from this single Instance.

If we had a clear Idea in this World of the inestimable Value of *sanctifying Grace*, our Loss of it by any mortal Sin would afflict us in so violent a Manner, that we should certainly die with Grief: Nature would be unable to subsist under the Weight of it. In like manner, if we had a clear Idea of *heavenly Beatitude*, we should be inconsolable in being separated from it, even for one single Moment; nothing in this World would have any Power to affect us with Pleasure, nor yield us any manner of Satisfaction. But 'tis the Incumbrance of corruptible Flesh and Blood that weakens and obscures our Ideas of spiritual Things; and the Weakness of our Ideas renders us so stupid, that neither the Loss of an inestimable Good, nor our Banishment in this Vale of Tears, affects us with any sensible Grief; and we are even forced to have recourse to the Help of natural Means, as Reading, and Meditating upon certain Truths, to work ourselves up to a tolerable Sense of what would otherwise overwhelm us with Anguish, if we had a true and clear Idea of the Unhappiness of our State.

So that it is not the Nature of the Objects only, tho' never so afflicting in themselves, but chiefly the Light in which they are represented, that excites our Grief. But when both are join'd together, and the most afflicting Objects are presented to us in the strongest and clearest Light that is possible, the Grief they cause must needs be violent and painful beyond Imagination.

Now this will help to lead us to some Notion of that violent Grief of a damn'd Soul, which we call the *Pain of Loss*. We must therefore consider, that the Soul of a Sinner dying in the State of mortal Sin, is no sooner separated from the Body, but has a full and clear Idea of the Dignity of her Nature, of the infinite Happiness for which she was created, and the Emptiness of those Things, for Love of which she has forfeited her Title to it. She knows then, clearly, what it is to be made to the Image and Likeness of God; how great and noble the Character of a Christian is, and to what Degree she has dishonour'd that Character, and debased herself by the Actions of her Life past. She knows then, clearly, that nothing less than the Possession of an infinite Good can make her happy; that she had once as good a Title to it as any Saint in Heaven; that it depended upon her own free Will to secure it for ever;
that

that she has forfeited it for meer Trifles, for Things of no Value, and that the Loss is utterly irreparable. At the same time, she has the most violent Inclination in her Nature to be happy, but sees herself reduced to a State in every Circumstance diametrically opposite to it.

Oh! what a dreadful Load of *Grief* and *Anguish*, what *Shame* and *Confusion*, what *Rage* and *Despair* must all these afflicting Ideas cause in an unfortunate Soul, especially when they carry with them a Conviction, that leaves no room for any Palliation or Excuse! *Grief* and *Anguish*, for the Loss of an infinite Happiness: *Shame*, for having lost it by her own Fault, when she might have secured it with the greatest Ease: *Confusion*, for having lost it for Pleasures beneath the Dignity of her Nature: And, finally, *Rage* and *Despair*, to see herself justly doom'd to endless and unspeakable Torments, without the least Hope of ever receiving any Comfort or Mitigation of her Pains; because the Incorruptibility of her Nature, and Unchangeableness of her State, renders her utterly incapable of it, and adds the Weight of *Eternity* to every Part and Circumstance of her unhappy Condition.

This leads me to the third remarkable Difference relating to the Nature of Grief in this World, and that of a Soul suffering

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independently of the Body. For the Condition of a Soul confined to the Body renders her subject to many natural Necessities, without which Life cannot subsist; we must eat and drink, and sleep, to support it. Besides, a great Part of our Time is divided between the Cares, Employments, and Amusements, incident to every State; and all these Things contribute to divert the Soul from attending to the Object which excites and nourishes her Grief; because they naturally introduce many new Ideas, either of agreeable or indifferent Objects, which interrupt her melancholy Thoughts from Time to Time; and tho' they return again, they seldom represent the afflicting Objects in the same disagreeable Light, and, by Consequence, make a weaker Impression than they did at first; which also wears off gradually with the Frequency of Interruptions. And thus it is, that Time seldom fails to be a Cure even for the most obstinate Grief in this Life.

But Things are quite otherwise in the Life to come: For a Soul separated from the Body is no longer subject to any of it's natural Necessities, nor diverted from one Thought to another by variety of Objects. Hence the Thoughts or Ideas which a damn'd Soul has in the Moment of her Condemnation, can never be changed nor interrupted; because there is nothing either within her or about her,
that

that can occasion any such Change or Interruption of Thoughts, nor by Consequence represent Things to her in a different Light; at one time, from what they appear to her at another: No, Christians, the Ideas of a damn'd Soul are always equally clear, equally strong, equally convincing; and what she thinks once she never ceases to think of. The Rigour, Justice, and Eternity of her Pains are always present to her Thoughts, and always in the same manner as at the Moment of her Separation from the Body. And, by Consequence, the Impressions of Grief, which those frightful Ideas of her having lost Heaven, and lost it by her own free Will, and lost it without Remedy; the Impressions, I say, which they make upon her in the first Moment of her Entrance into Hell, must of necessity continue in the same Degree of Violence for all Eternity.

Now what has been said concerning the Passion of Grief, must be applied to all the other Passions of an unfortunate Soul: I mean, her *Shame*, *Rage*, *Despair*, *Envy*, *Hatred*, and the like. For, as the Objects, which excite and nourish these Passions, always are and always appear the same, so the several Impressions, Movements and Agitations, which they produce, must likewise be the same for ever; as is farther confirm'd from this clear Reason.

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For if a damn'd Soul could change her Ideas, or pass from one Object to another, her Condition would be sometimes more, sometimes less painful, according to the Nature of the Objects that should work upon her. But since she is always equally criminal, the Law of Justice seems to demand, that she be always equally punish'd.

Oh! what a deplorable State is it to be for all Eternity in the Power of the most cruel and merciless Tyrants! to be forever oppress'd with unspeakable Grief, tortured with Rage and Despair, and burning with Desires which will never be gratified! Yet this is the Case of every damn'd Soul, in Proportion to the Measure of Sins committed in this Life. For as every mortal Sin plunges a Soul deeper into Hell-fire, and removes her farther from the Possession of God, so it heaps upon her an additional Increase of *Grief, Shame, and Despair*; and the more grievous her Torments are, the more she *envies* the Happiness of the Saints, and *bates* the infinite Justice of God, which inflicts them upon her.

Now then, let us take a short Review of all the Circumstances of the unhappy State I have described. Let us consider a spiritual and immortal Soul, noble in her Nature, and little inferiour to Angels: A Soul, created to enjoy a Crown of Glory,
banish'd

banish'd for ever from the Sight of God, and shut up within a dark and hideous Dungeon under Ground. *2dly*, Let us consider her thirsting ardently after Joys and Pleasures, and doom'd to everlasting Torments of unquenchable Flames. *Lastly*, Let us consider her without the least Power of helping herself, abandon'd to the heaviest Load of Grief, and the Fury of all her other Passions, acting incessantly upon her with their utmost Rage and Violence, and making her suffer all the Pangs and Agonies of a thousand Deaths, yet abandon'd by Death itself; which, when all Comforts fail, is at least a sure Refuge for Grief and Pain in this Life. Then let us make this short Reflection, but let us make it with a serious Attention, whether the Pleasures of Sin will not cost us a great deal too dear one Day, if we take not timely Care to expiate them with true penitential Tears.

Oh! let us grieve now, that we may not grieve for ever. Let us weep in Time, that we may not weep for all Eternity. But let us not throw away our Tears upon meer Trifles. The Sins we have already committed, and which we are still in danger of committing, demand and deserve them all. We weep for a dead Friend, and our Tears cannot bring him to Life again;

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whereas if our Souls be dead in Sin, we may restore them to Life with Tears of Penance: Heaven lost may be redeem'd by them. This is the principal Use for which they are design'd, by the Author of Nature; and if we make this Use of them, they will most certainly prevent the eternal but useless Tears of the Life to come, and be a Source of everlasting Comfort to our Souls.

The Sixteenth ENTERTAINMENT.

Reflections upon the Pains of Hell.

Who amongst us shall dwell with devouring Fire? who amongst us shall dwell with everlasting Burning? Isa. xxxiii. 14.

THOU' the Truths I have deliver'd concerning the everlasting Torments of Hell be very frightful, they will be of no Use to us unless we make our Reflections upon them, and draw Consequences from them for the Conduct of our Lives. This therefore shall be the Subject of this Entertainment.

The Reflection, that first offers itself to my Thoughts, arises from the Consideration of the dreadful Change of Condition,
that

that befalls a wretched Creature, who having loved and enjoy'd the Pleasures of this World, and being still possess'd with the same, nay, a far more violent Passion for them, finds himself, all on a sudden, plunged into everlasting Flames. For if even the Fall of great Men in this World be apt to overwhelm them with such a Load of Grief, as often sinks them into utter Despair, how shall we find Words to express or Ideas to conceive the Horror, Consternation, Rage and Despair that seizes a Person, who having wallow'd in all the Pleasures of a voluptuous Life, and indulged himself in every thing to the utmost of his Power, now sees himself, in a Moment, reduced not only to an utter Privation of all his former Enjoyments, but to a State of endless Misery and Torments! Oh! what a terrible Change is this, to pass from Ease, Conveniences and Pleasures, to eternal Pains! From the Gratifications of a sensual Life, to scorching Flames! In a Word, from all that Nature loves and admires, to a State made up of every Thing she fears and abhors!

However, it would be some Comfort in this dreadful turn of Condition, if a damn'd Soul had but any Hopes left, that there was still Room for another Change, tho' it were but after Millions of Years or Ages.

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But what gives the heaviest Aggravation to the Unhappiness of his State, and compleats his Misfortune, is the certain Knowledge he has, that this is the last Change he is ever like to see; the Thought whereof being always present to his Mind, is the Food of that everlasting Worm, which gnaws him without Intermission, and never allows him the least Glimpse of Hope. He knows, alas, and to exclude all Manner of Comfort, is not permitted, either to doubt, or cease thinking of it; he knows, I say, that the fiery Dungeon, to which he is condemn'd, is to be his everlasting Habitation; that burning Coals is to be his Bed for ever; that Fire and Brimstone is the only Air he is ever like to breathe; and that the cursed Company in which he now finds himself must always be the same: Finally, that neither his Eyes must ever see, nor his Ears ever hear, nor his other Senses be ever entertain'd with any thing but what the divine Justice has ordain'd to be the Instruments of his Torments.

Saint *Teresa*, as she had a great Stock of natural Wit, join'd with a strong and lively Faith, has left us, in her Writings, a most lively Description of this dreadful Change of a Person passing in an Instant from a State of Pleasures, Grandeur, and Esteem, to that of Torments, Ignominy and Dis-

Disgrace. “How shall I be able (says
“she) to express my Grief, when I repre-
“sent to my Thoughts the Condition of
“a Person, who having always seen him-
“self consider’d in this World, always
“loved, always waited on, respected and
“caress’d, shall in the Moment of his
“Death find himself lost for ever, and be
“clearly convinced that his Sufferings will
“never end! Nay, that it will now avail
“him nothing to seek to turn away his
“Thoughts from the Consideration of
“Eternity, as he was wont to do in his
“Life: When he shall see himself separa-
“ted, and, as it were, torn away from his
“Divertisements and Pleasures, even when
“he scarce thought he had begun to taste
“them; because whatever ends with Life
“passes as a Breath or Vapour: When
“he shall see himself encompass’d by that
“ghastly and cruel Company, with which
“he must suffer for Eternity: When he
“shall see himself thrown into a stinking
“Pool fill’d with Serpents, that will ex-
“ercise their utmost Rage upon him:
“Finally, when he shall see himself en-
“viron’d with that hideous Darkness,
“which having no Light, but a gloomy
“Flame, will only suffer him to see the
“Instruments of his everlasting Misery and
“Torments!

“O God!

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“ O God! How far short is what I
 “ say from the real Truth! And who
 “ then blinded the Eyes of that unfortu-
 “ nate Soul to such a Degree, as to hinder
 “ her from seeing that State of Miseries,
 “ till she saw herself plunged into it for
 “ Eternity! Who stop’d her Ears to
 “ that Degree, as to render her deaf to the
 “ Voice of those who forewarn’d her a
 “ thousand times of the Grievousness and
 “ Eternity of those Torments! O un-
 “ happy Eternity! O Torments without
 “ End or Mitigation! Is it possible that
 “ those should not fear thee, who are even
 “ so afraid of the least bodily Inconveni-
 “ ence, that they cannot endure to lie one
 “ single Night on a Bed that is not made
 “ easy for them!

These were the lively Ideas this Saint had of the terrible Change in the Condition of a Person passing from the Joys of this Life to the Torments of the next.

But let us now consider, in the second Place, how easy and delightful a penitential Life would seem to a Person under these unhappy Circumstances, and how welcome a Message it would be to him, if any one should come to let him know, that Almighty God would deliver him from that Place of Torments, provided he would but for a certain Number of Years consent to

expiate his past Sins by some rigorous Penance. Oh! with what Joy would he embrace the Proposal! How would he pour himself forth in Praises and Thanksgivings for so signal a Mercy! For what Shadow of Comparison is there between the least Torment of Hell, and the greatest Hardship of a penitential Life, especially considering the Eternity of the one, and the short Duration of the other!

Hence 'tis related in the Lives of the Fathers in the Desert, that a certain Recluse, having been for some time very cold and negligent in the Duties of his Calling, and falling into a dangerous Sickness, Almighty God was pleased to favour him with a Vision of the Torments of Hell: But being come to himself, and restored to Health, he immediately order'd himself to be shut up within four Walls, in which close Prison he continued for the Space of twelve Years, in the continual Practice of so severe a Penance, that he was the Astonishment of all that knew him; and being sometimes ask'd why he condemn'd himself to so much Rigour, he always answer'd, if they knew what he had seen, they would not wonder at what he did.

And truly, if we had a lively Faith, either of the Rewards or Punishments of the Life to come, we should be far from wondering

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dering, as we often do, at the Undertaking of those holy Men and Women, who renouncing all the Pleasures of this World, shut themselves up to become perpetual Victims of Penance. For tho' we may justly admire the Power of God's Grace in their Resolution and Constancy in persevering for many Years in a continual Contradiction to their natural Inclinations; yet if we consider at the same time the unspeakable Torments, which may certainly be avoided by those penitential Practices, we have no Reason to be astonish'd, that those whose Hearts are deeply penetrated with this Truth, should choose any Course of Life, tho' never so painful in itself, to secure themselves against Evils that are infinitely greater. Nay, we must own, that this is even following the Light of natural Reason, and acting according to the Dictates of a true Christian Self-love, if I may allow'd to call it so.

Hence it is, that impenitent Sinners are stiled *Children*, *Fools* and *Madmen*, by the Word of God; because they act as irrationally in the Concerns of Salvation, as if they were wholly destitute of Sense and Reason; since nothing can be more irrational, than to believe the everlasting Torments of Hell, and not use all Endeavours suitable to each one's respective State to
avoid

avoid them. For which Reason also the Damn'd are represented by God's Word condemning their past Follies in these remarkable Words: *Senseless that we were, we judged their Lives Madness*, to wit, the penitential Lives of holy Men, whom they despised, and look'd upon as Fools, because they acted not according to the Wisdom of the World ; whereas, poor Wretches, they now experience, to their everlasting Sorrow, that they themselves were the Fools, and those they took for such, were truly wise, in securing, whilst they had it in their Power, their eternal Interest, tho' with the Loss of all Things else.

But tho' all the Circumstances of the Change I have spoken of, *viz.* of a *rich Man* passing from the Pleasures of this Life to the Torments of the next, affords Matter for the most melancholy Reflections, there is something singularly unaccountable in the Miscarriage of the *Poor*. For when a rich Man loses his Soul, 'tis usually for Sins by which corrupt Nature is gratified in the most agreeable Manner: He lives continually encompass'd with a thousand Snares and Incentives to Vice, because his Wealth furnishes him with Means to be at the Expence of satisfying all the Cravings of his Inclinations: And tho' in so doing he really acts the Part of a Mad-

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a Madman, because the present Gratifications are infinitely disproportion'd to the Sufferings of his future State, yet considering the Corruption and Weakness of Man's Nature, it is less surprising to see him overcome by the strongest and most inviting Allurements, than if none of these Provocations to sin were before him.

When therefore a poor Man loses his Soul, there's scarce any Thing in Nature to account for it, and we may say he damns himself purely *gratis*. The very Poverty of his Condition screens him from the Vices that are most alluring to human Nature, as *Ambition, Luxury, Intemperance, Vanity*, and *worldly Pleasures*, which usually damn the Rich: Because all these Vices being clog'd with a continual Expence to support them, are out of the Reach of a Man that is forced to labour for Bread; and Experience is a convincing Proof, that Want of Opportunity is one of the most effectual Securities against Temptations. Besides, the very Hand of Providence has put the Poor in a Way, which if they pursue but steadily, and with a constant Eye upon the End to which it leads, cannot but bring them directly to a happy Eternity.

And what then are the Sins by which they usually forfeit that Happiness to
which

which they are entitled, both as *Christians* and as *Poor*? Their Sins are such as a Person acting rationally would avoid, tho' there were no Prospect of a future Happiness to induce him to it. For their very Nature is such, as makes them become a perpetual Vexation of Spirit, keeps the Mind upon the Rack, and destroys all inward Peace of Mind, which is the only solid Comfort of Life: The Sins I mean, are *Envy, Hatred, Choler, Fretting, Murmurs, and Discontents*. For 'tis by a long Series of these uneasy and tormenting Sins, that many pass from the Miseries of this Life to those of the next; whereas if they submitted with a chearful Resignation to the Circumstances in which Providence has placed them, and bore the Difficulties of their State purely for the Love of God, every thing would become tolerably easy in this Life, and Heaven would be their everlasting Inheritance hereafter. But by continually fretting and repining at their own Condition, and envying that of their Neighbour, or keeping Malice in their Hearts, they both double all the Sufferings which God has sent them, and deprive themselves of the whole Reward promised to those that bear them with a Christian Patience.

Now all this Impatience, Envy, Murmuring and Repining, and indeed all other Sins,
are:

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are chiefly owing to a Want of Reflection, and our not drawing rational Consequences from the Faith we have of the infinite Rewards and Punishments of the Life to come. For the very first practical Consequence, we ought to draw from this Belief, is, that whatever is a Means to preserve us from the Torments of Hell, and bring us to the Possession of the Joys of Heaven, ought to be regarded as a real and substantial Good, be it never so disagreeable in itself; and, on the contrary, whatever puts us in danger of losing our Souls, ought to be regarded as an Evil, tho' it be never so pleasing to our Inclinations. These two Principles alone, if deeply imprinted in our Hearts, would rectify all our Ideas of what we usually call temporal *Goods* and *Evils*, and place every thing in it's true Light. For if we took our Estimate of Things from these two Principles, *Wealth* and *Poverty*, *Honours* and *Disgrace*, *Afflictions* and *Prosperity*, would be considered no otherwise, than precisely as they may have an Influence upon the Happiness or Unhappiness of our future State.

This leads me to a *third Reflection* upon the merciful Dispensation of Providence to those whom God visits with *Afflictions* in this Life. For whatever is a Means to rescue us from eternal Evils, ought cer-

certainly to be regarded as a Mercy. Now nothing of its own Nature conduces more effectually to this End, than Sufferings, of what kind soever they be, or by what Hand soever they are presented; and we are sure to profit by them, unless by our ill Conduct we wilfully frustrate the Designs of Providence. The Reason hereof, according to St. *Austin*, is, because it is an unalterable Law, that Sin must be punish'd either now or hereafter. It follows therefore, that the only Way a Sinner has to prevent the Rigour of God's Justice hereafter, is to do now Justice upon himself, either by Mortifications of his own free Choice, or by humbly submitting to the Chastisements of his heavenly Father. For tho' these Sufferings be not voluntary by way of Choice, because it is not in our Power to avoid them, yet if we submit heartily to them, we make them, as it were, become our own Act and Deed; and by so doing render them as acceptable to Almighty God, and satisfactory for our Sins, as other Works of Penance, which we voluntarily impose upon ourselves.

But now, considering how backward Men generally are in punishing themselves, when it is left to their own free Wills, and how apt every one is to spare and favour himself, ought we not to acknowledge it as
a very

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a very great Mercy, when God is pleased to rescue us, as I may say, out of the Hands of our own Self-love and Sloth, and put us under a happy Necessity of suffering something for the present, rather than reserve us for those terrible Punishments, which infinitely surpass, both in their Grievousness and Duration, all the Sufferings we can imagine in this Life?

For what Comparison is there between *temporal* and *eternal*! Suppose, for Instance, that a tedious and painful Sickness is the Cross God sends us, is not this much easier than to burn for ever in Hell-fire? If Poverty with the Inconveniences that attend it be our Suffering, is not this Condition far more tolerable than that of the Damn'd, who are not only reduced to an utter Privation of every thing they possess'd in this World, but have lost Heaven itself, which we may still secure if we please? If God be pleased to visit us with the Loss of Persons that are dearest to us, is this any thing to the dreadful Pain of Loss, which the Damn'd suffer in Hell, and which we have so often merited by our Sins?

Finally, Suppose all the Sufferings of this Life were heap'd upon one single Man, whereof there is no Example to be found, might we not yet look upon his State as infinitely happy, if compared with the Miseries and Torments of the Damn'd?

How

How great a Goodness is it then in Almighty God to put it in our Power to satisfy his infinite Justice on such easy Terms as are the short Sufferings of this Life? What Mercy is it to accept of a Payment so infinitely disproportion'd to the infinite Debt we owe him, and be content with the Satisfaction of a light and momentary Pain, from those who have deserved the everlasting Torments of Hell-fire? Truly, whoever is not sensible of this Mercy has either lost his Faith, and flatters himself that Hell-fire is a meer Fiction, or his Reason, in not judging it better to suffer something for a Time, than be infinitely miserable for Eternity.

But to come now to a Conclusion ; it will not be amiss to take a serious View of the State of our Souls, and consider impartially what Tendency the main Body of our Actions have hitherto had ; and if we should continue to live on, much after the same way, what would be the End of it, naturally speaking. Now all know that nothing but mortal Sin, unrepented of, can bring us to Hell. If therefore a Man's Conscience reproaches him with nothing that is notorious, tho' he cannot have an infallible Security, he has however good Grounds to hope well of himself ; and the longer he has served God without offending
him

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him mortally, the better Ground he has for this Hope.

But if, on the contrary, a Person has gone on in a kind of regular Course of sinning, he has but two Things to do in order to prevent his being condemn'd to everlasting Flames: But these two Things are absolutely necessary, *viz.* *First*, to leave off sinning once for all; and, *2dly*, to do worthy Fruits of Penance for Sins past. If the Name of Penance startles him, let him consider that it is much easier doing Penance here, than burning in Hell. And since one of the two must be, his own Reason will direct him to the Choice he is to make: For we have it now in our Power to choose, but we shall not have it hereafter. Oh! if we could but see those fiery Dungeons kindled with unquenchable Flames! If we could but hear the frightful Lamentations, Curses, and Execrations of the Damn'd, how sweet and pleasing would the Name of Penance be! How should we bless God's infinite Goodness for having spared us so long, and giving us still Time and Opportunity to expiate our Sins, upon such easy Terms as may be done in this Life!

Let us not then demur any longer upon the Choice we are to make; for all Time spent in Deliberating is but Time lost: Every Moment of Delay makes but our Case grow worse, by rendering our Return to
God

God more difficult than it was before. For in the mean time our Enemy gains Ground upon us, our Habits take deeper Root, our Wills grow stiffer, our Hearts more corrupt, and, finally, our Passions more stubborn and rebellious against the Government of Reason and Impressions of Grace: All which are terrible Symptoms of a Soul advancing by large Steps to her eternal Ruin. O God, preserve us from this Misfortune. Give us Grace to repent in time, that we may not perish eternally.

THE XVIIth ENTERTAINMENT. OF HEAVEN.

The Joys of Heaven surpass all human Understanding.

The Eye has not seen, nor the Ear heard, neither have enter'd into the Heart of Man the Things which God has prepared for them that love him. 1 Cor. ii. 9.

Hitherto I have only represented Objects proper to affect us with Terror; but the Subject I am now entering
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upon will nourish our Hope, and kindle in our Hearts the most ardent Desires. 'Tis true, indeed, both *Fear* and *Hope* are necessary to preserve the Ballance of the Soul, but they work upon her in a different Manner. We are dragged to our Duty by Fear; but Hope allures us to it with Pleasure. The Fear of Punishment is often necessary to restrain the natural Current of Men's Passions; but the Hope of an eternal Crown is the noblest Incentive to Virtue, and prevails most upon generous Souls: 'Tis our Strength in Temptations, our Comfort in Afflictions, and our Refreshment amidst the Toils and Labours of this mortal Life.

Let us then examine, what God has revealed concerning the eternal Reward prepared for those who love him here on Earth. I shall at present confine myself to some Reflections upon the Words of my Text, which shall be the whole Subject of this Entertainment.

What the Word of God has revealed concerning the Joys of Heaven, viz. *That neither the Eye has seen, nor the Ear heard, neither has it enter'd into the Heart of Man, what God has prepared for those that love him*, imports two Truths: 1st, That the Nature of the Joys of Heaven is wholly unknown to us; and, 2^{dly}, That they surpass

pass all human Understanding. Now both these Truths furnish Matter for Reflections proper to give us a great Idea of them.

For, in the first Place, the Nature and Quality of the Joys of Heaven being such as are unknown to us, makes it evident, that they will be very different from what we experience in this Life; and this is a good Proof of their being true and solid Pleasures: The Reason is, because we certainly know, that those of this World are not so; since they, who have had the very choicest of them at command, and drank the largest Draughts of them, have after all been forced to own, that they are but *Vanity and Affliction of Heart*. It would therefore be a very poor Commendation of heavenly Beatitude, to tell us it will be of the same kind with what many have experienced here below. But when, on the contrary, we are certainly informed, that it will be something as yet unknown, and never tasted by any mortal Man; that the Figure of this World will pass, and a new Scene appear, which no mortal Eye has ever seen; this cannot but give us a very advantageous Idea of that blessed State; because we are at least assured by it, that none of those Pleasures, which we already know by unquestionable Experience to be adulterate and false, will be admitted into

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Heaven. Whence we may confidently conclude, that all its Joys will be solid and substantial, that is, such as will fully answer all the Ends and Purposes of the most perfect and complete Beatitude.

I add moreover, that the Joys of Heaven being wholly different from those we experience in this Life, gives us to understand, that even after the Re-union of the Body, they will not be borrowed from gross and earthly Objects, nor by Consequence conveyed to us by the Ministry of material sensitive Organs; for then they would be like the Pleasures of this World, and *the Eye might see them, the Ear bear them, and the Heart of Man might conceive them*; but they will be of a pure, refined, and spiritual Nature, such as are proper for a spiritual Substance, and a Soul delivered from the Clog of corruptible Flesh and Blood.

However, St. Paul has given us to understand, that the Body will also have its peculiar Reward. Yet the Nature of this Reward, even as described by St. Paul, will be such, that we can but have a very imperfect and obscure Idea of it in this Life. His Words are these: *It is sown in Corruption, it shall be raised in Incorruption: it is sown in Dishonour, it shall be raised in Glory: it is sown in Weakness, it shall be raised in Power: it is sown a natural Body,*

Body, it shall be raised a spiritual Body.

1 Cor. xv. 42.

Here we have the Body described by St. Paul, both as it is now, and will be hereafter. *It is sown* (says he) *in Corruption*; because it has the Seeds of *Corruption* and *Mortality* interwoven in its very Frame and Constitution. It is no sooner brought into the World, but it becomes the Subject of Diseases, and stands in need of being daily repaired with Food and Sleep, and frequently patched up with Remedies. Yet all this hinders not this crazy House of Clay from mouldering away by insensible Degrees, and falling to the Ground in a small Term of Years.

It is also *sown in Dishonour*; for of itself it is no better than a dead unactive Lump, and wholly unfit for any Function of Life, as appears plainly from the Moment that the Soul is separated from it. *It is sown in Weakness*; as being subject to numberless Infirmities, which keeps it in a continual Ebbing and Flowing, and such a constant Circulation of Changes, that its State is scarce ever fixed for the Space of one Day. Finally, *it is sown a natural Body*; that is, made of the same Earth as other Bodies, and is therefore a Hindrance rather than a Help to the free Exercise of our intellectual Powers.

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This is *St. Paul's* Description of the Body in its corruptible and mortal State, and we all find the Truth of it by daily Experience. But its Condition will be most wonderfully improved at the general Resurrection; for then, according to the Apostle's Doctrine, it will be raised in *Incorruption*, in *Glory*, in *Power*, and with all the Qualities and Advantages of a *spiritual Body*. Which doubtless gives us a general Idea of something very *perfect*, *beautiful*, and *noble*. But when we come to examine our Ideas, we find them almost wholly made up of *Negatives*; for no Man can form a distinct and positive Idea of an *incorruptible*, a *glorified*, or *spiritual Body*, any more than he can conceive the Nature of a *Thought*, or the Substance of a Man's Soul; because we have no Notion but of corporeal Extension and Matter. So that we rather conceive what the Body will not be, than what it really will be, at its second Meeting with the Soul.

We know, for Example, that the Seeds of Diseases and Mortality will be no longer a Part or Ingredient of its Constitution; that it will be no longer molested with jarring Qualities, which are the inward Causes of its Decay, nor subject to Alterations produced by outward Causes; that,
finally,

finally, it will be divested of all its former Weaknesses, and so fitted by the omnipotent Hand of God, that it will be no more a Clog upon the intellectual Faculties, but made to answer the very quickest Motions of the Soul.

All this, I say, we know, being assured of it by the revealed Word of God. But all this Knowledge amounts to no more than separating from the Body the Defects and Infirmities that attend it in this mortal Life. But as to any clear or positive Notion, how a true and real Body can be *spiritual, impassible, and immortal*; or how it will be organized after the Resurrection, or in what Manner the Soul will be affected by it, or act in Conjunction with it, these are Mysteries, concerning which we are yet wholly in the dark; and an humble Faith must supply the Defect of our Ideas, till God be mercifully pleased to favour us with an experimental Knowledge of the Happiness of our future State.

But if the proper Nature, even of the Reward prepared for the *Body*, be unknown to us, the Joys and Pleasures laid up for Man's better Part, the *Soul*, are yet farther removed from our Knowledge in this World. We are sure it is by reason of their Greatness, Excellency, and Sublimeness, that they cannot *enter into the Heart*

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of Man ; and that they surpass all earthly Delights as much as the future State of the Soul will surpass that of her present Confinement to an earthly and corruptible Body. For since it is beyond all question, that God has fitted his Rewards to the Nature and Condition of those that are to enjoy them, there is no room to doubt but that the Delights, he has prepared for the Soul in her perfectest State, will be the purest and noblest of all Pleasures ; that is, such as an immortal Soul, wholly separated from all *earthly Allay*, or re-united to a *glorified Body*, can relish, and be consummately happy in.

But if any one objects, that a bare Prospect of Things unknown and unexperienced affords but little Encouragement to part with the present Enjoyments of Life, Nature being unwilling to renounce what is found experimentally pleasing, in hopes of Things we know nothing of, nor how they will affect us hereafter ; I answer, that tho' we have no clear or distinct Knowledge of heavenly Beatitude, we know in general that it is something very great, something highly excellent and charming: For the Word of God has taken care to represent it to us under the noblest Figures ; as of an *eternal Feast*, an *everlasting Kingdom*, a *never-fading Crown of Glory*,

Glory, and so forth. Now, suppose it were any Man's Case to be invited to take Possession of some foreign Kingdom, and that he were at the same time informed, by Persons of undoubted Truth, that this Kingdom abounded with all Things requisite to make him a glorious and happy Prince, would he be so foolish as to despise it, because he had not travelled into it, nor ever seen any Part of it, nor had any particular Knowledge of the proper Nature or Qualities of the Things that were to make him happy? Surely no rational Man would ever act so foolish a Part.

And is not this a faithful Representation of our Case in reference to the *Kingdom of Heaven*? We are all invited to it; we are certainly informed, that it is a most glorious Kingdom; nay, a Kingdom abounding with every thing a rational Soul can wish to make him perfectly happy. 'Tis true, we know not distinctly what those Things are; we have never travel'd into those upper Regions of eternal Bliss, where God displays his Glory to the blessed Spirits which encompass the Throne; nor have our Eyes or Ears been ever entertain'd with the charming Wonders of that Place. But we are undoubtedly assured, that our very highest Expectations will not only be fully satisfied, but

infinitely surpass'd: We are assured; that when we have put off these Bodies, we shall then have a clear View of those surprising Glories which are now hidden from us: Which surely ought to be sufficient both to inflame our Hearts with the most ardent Desires of them, and spur us on to the Practice of all Virtues necessary to render us worthy to be admitted to them.

This will appear more evident from the second Truth contain'd in the Words of my Text, *viz. that the Joys of Heaven surpass all human Understanding.* For it follows plainly from this Truth, that whatever State of Happiness the Wit of Man can invent or imagine, tho' far beyond any Thing that has or ever will be attain'd to in this Life, comes infinitely short of the real Blessings God has prepared for us.

Now to apprehend, as we ought, the Improvement that may be made of this Reflection, I will endeavour to set forth the most compleat and perfect State of imaginary Felicity, a Man can frame to himself; and by considering, first, what great and charming Things we are able to conceive; and then reflecting how little all this must, notwithstanding, be, comparatively to a State of Happiness, which for its Excellency and Greatness surpasses our Conceptions, we shall thence be able to make the truest Judg-
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ment of the blessed State prepared for us in Heaven.

First, then, let us suppose Almighty God should create a new World or Terrestrial Paradise, bless'd every where with a sweet and temperate Air, enjoying a perpetual Day ; - beautified with all Variety of pleasing Objects to delight the Senses ; and, in a Word, abounding with every Thing, not only to supply all the Necessities and Conveniences of Life, but even to entertain it with a continual Succession and agreeable Variety of Pleasures.

Next, let us suppose all Pains and Evils banish'd from this Place, as *Hunger* and *Thirst*, *Heat* and *Cold*, *Wars* and *Enmities*, *Cares* and *Troubles*, *Diseases* and *old Age*, *Sin* and *Death* ; and, in a Word, whatever in our present State contributes to make Life uneasy and uncomfortable to us. Lastly, let us imagine some one chosen Creature endowed with all the rare Perfections both of Mind and Body, to fit him for the sovereign Empire of this new World, and all other Creatures paying an entire Subjection to him, and striving to contribute, with the utmost of their Power, to compleat his Happiness.

Now we must own the State here set forth to be such as, humanly speaking, has nothing wanting to satisfy the highest Ambition

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bition and largest Desires of Man's Heart. For it both comprehends, in a very eminent Degree, every thing we usually esteem and admire, and excludes whatever Man's Nature fears or hates. In effect, who of us all would not think himself as happy as a rational Creature could wish or desire to be, if it were his Lot to be raised to the Condition I have described? It is evident, that the highest Felicity, and most envied State of this World, is but Misery and Servitude, if put in Ballance with it. Yet nothing is more certain, than that the real Beatitude of the other World is infinitely beyond this imaginary one, how ravishing and delightful soever it appears to human Sense.

Good God! Is Heaven then yet infinitely more charming than what exceeds by so many Degrees all the Delights this World can afford! Is the Felicity thou hast prepared for thy faithful Servants, not only infinitely greater than all the real Blessings that have ever been enjoyed in this Life, but even surpassing all imaginary ones we can frame to ourselves! Is it not Happiness enough to be delivered from all that is painful to Nature, and to be made sovereign Lord and Monarch of a Kingdom abounding with every Thing that is pleasing and delightful to us? Has thy
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Bounty still greater Blessings in Store for such poor Wretches as we are? Yes, Christians, for all that I have mention'd is within the Bounds of what is *comprehensible*, and *can enter into the Heart of Man*. But the Joys of Heaven are too great to be conceiv'd; neither *the Eye has seen, nor the Ear heard, nor has it enter'd into the Heart of Man, what God has prepared for them that love him*. And therefore, as there is no Proportion between what is comprehensible, and what surpasses all human Comprehension; it follows, that the Heavenly Beatitude is incomparably greater than what I have described; as being a State, the Joys whereof neither Words can express, nor Thoughts can reach.

'Tis true, the Word of God gives us an Account of the *celestial Jerusalem*, much resembling the imaginary World I have described. For it tells us, that it is a City, whose Walls are raised with *precious Stones*, and every Gate is made of a *rich Pearl*; that its Mansions are built with *choicest Jewels*, and the Pavement of its Streets are all *transparent Gold*; that in the midst there runs a crystal River, perpetually flowing from the Throne of God, upon whose Banks are planted *Trees of Life*, making immortal all that but taste its Fruit; that this blessed City enjoys an *everlasting*

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everlasting Day; because *its Sun is the Lamb, and the Light that shines, the Glory of God*; that Hunger and Thirst are banish'd from it; that the Inhabitants of this thrice happy City are *crown'd Heads*, and in secure Possession of an *everlasting Reign*; that the glorified Bodies shine brighter than the Sun, and being cloath'd with Incorruptibleness, enjoy an *ever-flourishing Youth*, and are deliver'd from all those painful Diseases, which insensibly destroy Nature, and are the usual Harbingers of Death.

This is the Description which the Word of God gives of the *Heavenly Jerusalem* and it's Inhabitants. However, it is certain, that the greatest Part of it is made up of figurative Expressions, accommodated to our earthly Taste, and representing the happy State of Souls in Glory, by Types and Figures of Things best known and most valued in this World. For if Gold, and precious Stones, rich Buildings, and other such like sensible and material Objects were the Things that are to make us happy hereafter, the Joys of Heaven might easily be conceived, and every one would be capable of forming a clear Idea of them. And therefore, since we are assured, that they surpass all human Conception, and have never enter'd into the Heart of Man,

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the Consequence is, that all material Objects, tho' never so precious, and all the Pleasures of this World, tho' never so noble and refined, are but faint Shadows of the Blessings that constitute the essential Beatitude of the Life to come.

After these Reflections it will not be surprising, that the Saints had no other Concern in this Life, than how to secure Heaven to themselves; that they had it always in their View, bore it continually in their Hearts, made it the Object of all their Affections, the Center of all their Desires, and the End of all their Actions. For they were directed by the Light of Faith, and their Faith taught them, that God had created them for eternal and incomprehensible Joys, to which the Enjoyments of this Life bore no Proportion. This was Inducement enough to make them despise the one, and continually thirst after the other. This gave them a Disgust of all earthly Pleasures, and made the Riches and Honours of this World appear as contemptible to their Thoughts, as they are in themselves. This, finally, made them set so high a Value upon Heaven, as to purchase it, even with the most painful Sufferings. And this ought likewise to have at least so far an Influence upon us, as both to render us faithful in the Discharge of all the Duties of a Christian Life,

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Life, and make us submit chearfully to all the Crosses and Afflictions, Almighty God is pleased to send us.

The XVIIIth ENTERTAINMENT.

Of the beatifick Vision.

Now we see through a Glass darkly, but then Face to Face. Now I know in Part, but then shall I know even as also I am known. 1. Cor. xiii. 12.

TO see God *Face to Face*, and know him *as he is in himself*, is that perfect and consummate Happiness of Man's Soul, of which I am now going to speak: and I am very sensible of the Difficulty of the Task I have undertaken. For we are so unacquainted with what passes in the other World, that to treat of this Subject is like walking in a dark and unknown Path, where we may very easily either stumble upon some Error, or mistake groundless Fancies for solid Truths. I shall therefore endeavour to proceed with so much Caution, as not to advance one single Step, without taking either the holy Scriptures, or at least some of the

the Fathers or approved Divines, for my Guide. I have already said something concerning the Glory of the Body, and shall at present only speak of that Part of heavenly Beatitude which regards the Soul, and which St. *Austin* has epitomiz'd in these three Words; *videbimus, amabimus, laudabimus*; we shall see, we shall love, we shall praise. The first Word expresses the whole Substance of the *beatifick Vision*, as Divines call it, that is, the Sight of God, which makes the Soul happy. The two other Words express the immediate and inseparable Effects of it; viz. the *Love, Joy, and Delight*, which result from this blessed Vision in the Soul; of which I shall treat in my next Discourse, intending to make the *beatifick Vision* alone the Subject of this Entertainment.

'Tis certain, that Man's Soul being a spiritual Substance cannot be happy but in the Possession of some spiritual Good, nor perfectly happy, but in the Possession of the most perfect spiritual Good: And therefore when the Scripture seems to promise certain sensible and material Goods, as *Crowns and Kingdoms, Youth without Decay, Wealth, Power, and magnificent Palaces*; when it tells us, that the Saints shall eat and drink in the Kingdom of God; finally, when it sets forth the celest-
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tial Jerusalem as a City abounding in all such Things as are most valued in this World, as built with *precious Stones*, paved with the *purest Gold*, beautified with *state'y Towers*, and so forth, we must, as I have already observed, take care not to imagine as if the Enjoyment of Things of this Nature were to be the essential Reward of the Life to come. For this would be to set up a kind of *Mahometan* Beatitude instead of the *Christian* one, and translate the World itself into Heaven. And what can be the Consequence hereof, but our making the World, instead of Almighty God, our last End, and the principal Object of our Love, Hope, and Desire?

St. *Aust:n* himself, in his Comment upon the 86th *Psaln*, has taken care to precaution us against this Error. *Let us beware* (says he) *not to propose to ourselves any Pleasures like those we relish here on Earth. For otherwise all our Temperance, which makes us now abstain from worldly Pleasures, will be the Fruit of Self-love. There are those that fast, only to eat afterwards with a better Relish: If therefore you believe that the Pleasures of Heaven will be like those of this World, and you refrain from them now upon no other Motive than to enjoy them more fully hereafter, you imitate those that fast only to prepare themselves*

setves for a Feast, and in their very Practice of Temperance are guilty of a greater Intemperance.

Thus St. *Austin*; who is very large upon this Subject, to prevent our falling into an Error which would utterly destroy the Love of God, and set up Self-love in it's Place. 'Tis therefore an undoubted Truth, that the essential Felicity of the Soul consists not in the Enjoyment of any of those sensible Objects or Pleasures, to which Self-love inclines us in this Life; and that whatever Expressions in Scripture seem to favour this sort of Beatitude, are not to be understood literally, but in a figurative or spiritual Sense, as will appear beyond all Question, from other Passages of holy Writ, which I shall have Occasion to quote hereafter.

First, then, the Scripture tells us, that the blessed Souls in Heaven shall *see God Face to Face*, that they shall see him *clearly*, and as he is in himself: For the better Understanding whereof we must observe, that to *see* and *know God*, are synonymous Terms, and signify the self-same Thing. For Almighty God being a *pure Spirit* cannot be seen with corporeal Eyes; and the Soul being also a *spiritual Substance* has, properly speaking, no Eyes but what are spiritual. Now the Eye of the Soul is her *Under-*
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derstanding: Whatever therefore the Soul *knows*, she is properly said to *see*, and to *see clearly* what she *knows clearly*.

This being supposed, the Scripture, I say, tells us, that the Saints in Heaven shall not only *see God*, but see him *clearly*. This is St. Paul's Doctrine, in the Words of my Text. *Now we see as through a Glass in a dark sort, but then Face to Face: Now I know in Part, but then shall I know even as I am known.* 'Tis true indeed, we know God in this Life, but we know him only by Faith; and tho' Faith be certain, 'tis however obscure, it shews him not as he is in himself; we only see him at a Distance, and, as it were, through a dark Mist or Cloud. But hereafter this Cloud will be removed from before the Eyes of the Soul. *Faith* will then cease, and the *Sight of Glory* succeed in it's Place. And then will the infinite Beauty and incomprehensible Majesty of God appear in it's full Lustre. God will then no longer hide his Face from us. No Cloud or Darkness will then interpose, to rob us of any Part of this blessed Object. But we shall see him clearly; we shall see him intimately united to us; we shall see him as he is in himself.

Oh! What a blessed Sight will this be! How glorious, how charming! How worthy of a Christian Soul to covet and thirst

thirst after! For by thus seeing God clearly, and as he is in himself, we shall be perfectly acquainted with all those dark and sublime Myſteries, which now ſurpaſs all human Underſtanding: As the Diſtinction of three Perſons in one indiviſible Nature; the eternal Proceſſion of the *Son* from the *Father*, and of the *Holy Ghoſt* from the *Father* and *Son*, and the ineffable Union of the *divine* and *human Nature* ſubſiſting in one *increated Perſon*.

2dly, We ſhall ſee all the infinite *Attributes*, that is, Perfections of God. We ſhall ſee that boundleſs *Wiſdom*, which *reaches ſtrongly from End to End, and diſpoſes all Things ſweetly*: That unlimited *Power*, which, with a ſingle Word, produced Heaven and Earth out of Nothing: That fathomleſs Depth, and inexhauſtible Fund of *Goodneſs*, which inceſſantly communicates itſelf to all created Beings; and that infinite *Mercy*, which prompted him to give his only Son to redeem Mankind.

Finally, in ſeeing God clearly we ſhall diſcover all the hidden Ways of *Providence* in the Government of this World. As why Innocence is often permitted to be oppreſs'd, and Wickedneſs to proſper: Why our Prayers are ſometimes heard, and at other times rejected: Why Miſeries and Poverty were the Lot of ſome, and Proſperity and
Wealth

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Wealth the undeserved Blessing of others. He that was persecuted, hated, and contemn'd, will then clearly see why Providence allotted him that Portion. He that was sick and poor, deprived of all Conveniences of Life, and forced to earn his Bread with the daily Sweat of his Brows, whilst others enjoy'd their Ease, and wallow'd in Pleasures, will then be thoroughly convinced of the infinite Wisdom and Justice of this seeming Partiality, and confess that God was more favourable to him, than he would have been to himself, had he been permitted to make his own Desires the Rule of his Choice.

All this, I say, and infinitely more than I am able to express, will the Saints see, in seeing God; and that not confusedly, but clearly and distinctly; not successively or by Parts, but altogether, and at one single, unchangeable, and eternal View. *Non erunt ibi* (says St. *Austin*) *volubiles cogitationes nostræ ab aliis ad alias euntes atque redeuntes.* There, viz. in Heaven, our Thoughts shall not be roving, or passing to and fro from Object to Object; but from the very Moment the Soul is admitted to the beatifick Vision, the Unsettledness and Wandring of her Thoughts, which Imperfection attends her in this Life, will forthwith cease, and her whole Attention be eternally and
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immoveably fix'd upon one single Object, which is God himself, in whom she will see all Things necessary to render her completely happy.

It remains now only to shew, that this clear Sight or Knowledge of God is that which makes the Soul happy. Saint *Austin* gives this Reason for it; because to see or know God clearly, is to *possess* him: *eum nosse habere est*. And since a Soul, that's in Possession of an infinite Good, cannot but be completely happy, it follows that the Soul's Beatitude consists in this clear Sight or Knowledge of God. This Reason of St. *Austin* is grounded upon our Saviour's own Words, *John* 17th, where he addresses himself thus to his eternal Father: *This is Life everlasting to know the only true God*. To know him by the dim Light of *Faith*, is but a necessary Disposition to eternal Life; but to know him by the clear *Light of Glory*, is that which puts the Soul in a secure and everlasting Possession of him.

However, since to our Imagination there appears a large Difference between *seeing* and *possessing* a Thing, St. *Austin*, to correct this Error of Imagination, endeavours to prove it by this Argument, that in Relation to God they are the same. Because, God being the most excellent and transcendent

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scendent Good, cannot be possess'd but by that Part of Man which is most excellent in him, *viz.* his *Soul*. And since the *Understanding* is the noblest Faculty, and *Knowledge* the noblest Operation of the Soul, he concludes, that whatever is possess'd by the Soul, is possess'd by knowing, *quicquid autem mente habetur, noscendo habetur*; and thence he infers, that to know God clearly, is to possess him.

This is St. *Austin's* Argument, which sets this Matter in as easy a Light as it's Obscurity will permit. In effect, all intellectual Beings, from the highest to the lowest, have no other way of *possessing* than by *knowing*. God himself, who is the supreme intellectual Being, has from all Eternity possess'd himself, and been infinitely happy by *comprehensively* knowing his own infinite Essence. The *Angels* are also perfectly happy by possessing God; and possess him no otherwise than by seeing him clearly. Hence our Saviour, to describe their Happiness, expresses it in these few Words, *the Angels in Heaven always see the Face of the Father which is in Heaven*. Now then, to come down to the lowest intellectual Being, which is Man's Soul, since our Saviour assures us, that in the Life to come *we shall be like the Angels of God*, it follows, that our Happiness will be the same in Sub-

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stance as theirs; and that as they see God *Face to Face*, and in thus seeing him possess him, and in possessing him are perfectly happy, so shall we also possess God by seeing him, and by possessing him be Partakers with them in eternal Bliss.

Hence it is that holy *Job*, in the Extremity of his Afflictions, had recourse to no other Comfort than the Hopes he had of being one Day admitted to this blessed Vision. *I believe, says he, that my Redeemer liveth, and in the last Day I shall rise out of the Earth, and be compass'd again with my Skin, and in my Flesh shall see God, whom I myself shall see, and mine Eyes shall behold and no other: This Hope is laid up in my Bosom.* This also made the *Royal Prophet*, who had a lively Faith of the future State of Souls, express such ardent Longings to see God. *As the Hart, says he, pants after the Water-brooks, so pants my Soul after thee, O God; my Soul thirsts for God, for the living God. O when shall I come and appear before thy Face!* But why did this holy Prophet thus earnestly desire to see the Face of God? He gives this Reason for it in another Psalm; *I shall be satiated, when thy Glory shall appear.* For he knew this blessed Sight would put him in secure Possession of an infinite

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Good, and leave no Desire of his Soul unsatisfied.

But if you ask how it is possible, that since there is an infinite Disproportion between the infinite Majesty of God, and the Littleness inseparable from the Condition of a created Being; since the Scripture tells us, that God *dwells in inaccessible Light*; finally, since God himself declared to his great Servant *Moses* desiring to see his Face, *that no Man can see his Face and live*; if you ask, I say, how it is possible that any Creature should be able to bear the clear Sight of God and intimate Presence of so great a Majesty? I answer, that no Soul would be able to bear the clear Sight of God, were she not first prepared and fitted for it by a certain supernatural Quality, which School-men call the *Light of Glory*. I will not pretend to explain to you the Nature of this Quality, but hope we shall one Day experience the happy Effects of it, and we shall then know what it is to our everlasting Joy and Comfort. However, Divines agree, that it is the most sublime and perfect Participation of the divine Nature, a pure Creature is capable of: So that as the very lowest Degree of *sanctifying Grace* surpasses in it's intrinsic Value any thing, tho' never so perfect, within the Sphere of Nature, so in
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like Manner this *Light of Glory* transcends in Excellency whatever is most sublime within the Order of *Grace*. St. *Denis* defines it *influxus substantificus Divinitatis*, a substantial Influence of the Divinity. Which Expression seems to import, as if Almighty God darted, as it were, some Rays of his own infinite Light into the Souls of the Blessed, to enable them to bear his divine Presence.

Hence Divines attribute principally two Effects to this *Light of Glory*. The first is to fortify and strengthen the Soul in such a Manner as to enable her to subsist in the Presence of God, and not be dazzled with the *Splendor of his Glory*. 'Tis of this Light, according to St. *Austin's* Explication, the Royal Prophet speaks in his 35th Psalm, where he addresses himself thus to God, *in lumine tuo videbimus lumen*; in thy Light we shall see Light. For here the Prophet distinguishes between two Lights, viz. that *which we shall see*, and that *by which we shall see it*. The first is God himself, and 'tis what we ask, when we pray for the departed Souls, that *eternal Light may shine unto them*: But that, whereby we shall see it, is the *Light of Glory* I now speak of. So that the Prophet's Meaning is, that by virtue of the *Light of Glory*,
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which will be infused into us, we shall see God, who is himself *eternal Light*.

But no one speaks more clearly of this blessed Light than the Prophet *Isaiab*, Chap. lx. where his prophetick Spirit suddenly carrying him from the Contemplation of the future Increase and Prosperity of the Church militant to that of the Glory of the Church triumphant, he discourses thus upon it: *Thy Sun shall be no more thy Light by Day, neither shall the Brightness of the Moon give Light unto thee: But the Lord shall be unto thee an everlasting Light, and thy God, thy Glory. Thy Sun shall no more go down, neither shall thy Moon withdraw itself, but the Lord shall be thy everlasting Light, and the Days of thy Mourning shall be ended.* Thus speaks this holy Prophet, declaring thereby, that God will not only be clearly seen by the Saints, but that himself will be the Light whereby they shall see him.

The second Effect which Divines attribute to this *Light of Glory* is it's raising the Soul in such an eminent Degree above herself, as to render her, as it were, all *Godlike* and *Divine*. Now in this they ground themselves upon this celebrated Sentence of St. *John*, *We know*, says he, *that when God shall appear, we shall be like unto him, because we shall see him as he is.*

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By which the Apostle means not barely a Likeness of *Conformity*; for that may be attain'd to by the Help of Grace even in this Life; but doubtless some *closer Union* and nearer Relation to God: But whatever it be (for no Words can express it) we may boldly conceive something extraordinary, and surpassing by many Degrees the most elevated *Extasies* and *Unions*, the greatest Saints have ever experienced in this Life; since these were only some kind of Antipasts of future Glory.

And therefore spiritual Writers, to give us the highest Ideas possible of it, endeavour to explain it by the Similitude of a red-hot Iron, which has the Fire so incorporated with it, that it seems to be no more Iron, but transubstantiated into Fire; or of a Drop of Water, which being pour'd into any Quantity of Wine loses all it's Taste and Colour, seems to change it's Nature, and be turn'd into Wine. For so the blessed Souls in Heaven, by virtue of that intimate Participation of Almighty God, are so closely united to him, that they seem wholly lost in that Ocean of Bliss, and become, as it were, one and the same thing with him. *For when God shall appear, we shall be like unto him, because we shall see him as he is.*

O what a blessed Change will this be!
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as far as this mortal State will permit, from all sinful Defilements, and imitating his infinite Holiness by the constant Practice of an innocent and holy Life. *For every Man that has this Hope, purifies himself even as he is pure.* And by thus purifying himself becomes worthy to be admitted to his blessed Sight, where he will *love* and *praise* him, and *rejoice* in him for ever; as I shall shew at large in my next Discourse.

The XIXth ENTERTAINMENT.

Of the *Love, Joy, and Praises* resulting from the beatifick Vision.

Lord, it is good for us to be here.
Matth. xvii.

THUS spoke St. *Peter*, transported with excessive Joy and Pleasure to see his dear Lord and Master all glorious; tho' himself had no Share in this Transformation, but was a bare Witness or Spectator of it: And how then will a Soul be ravish'd with Delight, when she finds herself, all on a sudden, translated from the
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Miseries of this Life to a State of Immortality and inconceivable Joys! With what feeling Sense of her Happiness will she then say, *Lord, it is good for us to be here!* And how will her Joy be increased, when she is undoubtedly assured of the Unchangeableness of her State, and that her eternal Abode is to be with Christ in Glory! When she will not only see Christ's sacred Humanity outshining the Brightness of the Sun, but all the infinite Beauties and Perfections of the divine Nature; the clear Sight whereof is that which constitutes her *essential* Happiness, as I have shewn at large in my last Discourse; and will now proceed to explain it's immediate and inseparable Effects: I mean, the *Love, Joy, and Delight* resulting from this blessed Vision in the Soul, which shall be the whole Subject of this Entertainment.

'Tis impossible to see God clearly, and not love him. Because infinite *Beauty*, infinite *Majesty*, infinite *Goodness* and *Perfection*, clearly seen, are Objects that command Love with an irresistible Force. And therefore Divines say, that tho' the Saints in Heaven love God with the whole Propensity of their Souls, and desire nothing more than to love him, and see him eternally beloved by all his Creatures, yet, to speak properly, they do not love him

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freely; because seeing nothing in him but what is infinitely charming and worthy of Love, they have it not in their Power not to love him, but are under a happy Necessity of loving him with the whole Capacity of their Souls.

However, to give you the clearest Idea I can of the Greatness of their Love, the proper Seat whereof is that Part of the Soul which is call'd the *Will*, it is requisite to consider the unhappy Condition of Man's *Will* in this Life comparatively to her happy State in the Life to come. Now Man's Will is commonly call'd by Divines a *blind Power*, because she has no Light of her own; but all the Light she has is communicated to her by the Understanding, which also is oftner a false Light than a true one: If she *fears*, *bates*, or *flies* any thing, 'tis because the Understanding represents it as an *Evil*, whether it be real or imaginary. In like Manner, if the Understanding represents the Possession of any thing as a considerable *Good*, or at least as preferable to the Privation of it, the *Will* conceives immediately a Love for it, moves towards it with eager Desires, if it be absent, and is agreeably affected with it, if it be present.

But this Pleasure seldom lasts long in this Life, but after a short Enjoyment is either
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utterly destroy'd, or very much abated by some considerable Defect appearing in the Object, which insensibly weans the Will from her first Affection to it, and often changes it into Aversion.

Now this Inconstancy and Changeableness of the Will in this Life is chiefly owing to the *mixt Nature* of all earthly Goods and Evils. For as there is scarce any thing so bad, but has some Good either interwoven in it's Nature, or resulting from it, so there is nothing so good and perfect, but upon a strict and impartial Examination some Blemish or Imperfection may be discover'd in it: And this is the Reason why neither our *Inclinations* nor *Aversions* are ever in a fix'd State in this Life, but are always either ebbing or flowing, according as *Good* or *Evil* appears to preponderate in their respective Objects. Thus the same Things or Persons, differently represented, may appear very agreeable at one time, and very disagreeable at another: We may pursue a thing with an eager Desire to-day, grow indifferent to it to-morrow, and perhaps hate it the next Day after; because what we loved at first being afterwards regarded in a different Light, we may discover Defects and Imperfections in it, which were before conceal'd from us.

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Neither is this Changeableness of the Will only in relation to the Things of this World, which have all their Alloy mix'd with their very natural Frame and Texture, but likewise in relation to the most important spiritual Concerns, and such Things as our Faith assures us to be *unmix'd Goods* and *Evils*; as the Possession of *sanctifying Grace*, on the one hand, and the Loss of it on the other. For no Man doubts but that *sanctifying Grace* is an *unmix'd Good*, and the Loss of it an *unmix'd Evil* in its Nature. Besides, our Understanding directed by Faith is convinced that God is an *infinite Good*, and that the Practice of Virtue alone can secure this infinite Good to us, and Sin alone can deprive us of it. And how comes it then that the *Will*, being directed, as I have said, in all her Motions by the *Understanding*, is not in a continual eager Pursuit after the Possession of this Good? Or that she flies not with the utmost Abhorrence every thing that may rob us of it?

The first Reason hereof is, because, however advantageous our Ideas are of Almighty God, and tho' we know them to be unquestionably true, yet they are so imperfect and obscure, that they make but a very weak Impression upon the *Heart*, which is much more powerfully wrought

wrought upon by the clear Ideas of *sensible Goods*, convey'd to her in a feeling and palpable Manner by the Ministry of the Senses, than by meer *spiritual Objects*, proposed by the dim Light of Faith, and which cannot be seen, nor felt, nor clearly understood.

The second Reason is the almost continual Dissipation of the Mind, diverted from the Thoughts of God partly by the Cares, and partly by the Amusements of this Life. So that the Ideas we have of God either lying dormant by Inapplication, or being stifled in a Throng of worldly Thoughts, the Heart or Will is very little affected with the passing Glances we sometimes cast towards him.

But the third and principal Reason is, because the Understanding itself acts many times a treacherous Part, confederate with the Enemies of our Salvation, and, instead of guiding the Will by the Light of *Faith*, seduces her by the Suggestion of Flesh and Blood. So that, altho' it represents Almighty God as an *infinite Good*, it discourages the Will from pursuing the Acquisition of it, by representing it as a Task incumber'd with Difficulties almost insuperable to human Nature. It paints upon the Imagination all the Restraints and Self-denials of a vir-
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tuous Life in such frightful Colours, and sets forth the Charms of Liberty and Pleasures in such an agreeable Light, that the Will, prevail'd upon by these deceitful Appearances, is easily determined to consent to Sin for the Sake of the Pleasure annex'd to it, and to reject God's Grace by reason of the Combats and Difficulties that attend the Preservation of it. Because *Pleasures* are consider'd as a *Good*, and *Self-denials* as an *Evil* to Nature.

This is the unfortunate Condition of the *Will* in this mortal State: ever various and inconstant in her Desires, pursuing with Eagerness imaginary Goods, and flying from imaginary Evils. But *when this Corruptible shall put on Incorruption, and this Mortal shall be cloath'd with Immortality*: When *Faith* shall cease, and the *Light of Glory* succeed in its Place, then will she be entirely delivered from this servile Subjection to the Caprice of a deluded Imagination, and the Misrepresentations of a deceitful Understanding. Then will she be no more in danger of relapsing into her natural Inconstancy: Because the Object of her Love will always *be* and always *appear* the same; that is, infinitely *beautiful*, and infinitely *charming*. And the *Light of Glory* shewing this blessed Object eternally present, and shewing it clearly,

ly, and as it is in itself, her Love will not only be without Check, but so immoveably fix'd, as to be beyond all Possibility of Abatement, Interruption or Change.

But now to bring these Reflections upon the two different States of the Soul into some Order and Method, the *first* material Difference between the Condition of a Soul in Bliss and her State in this mortal Life is, that the Ideas we have of God in this Life are extremely *weak* and *obscure*. We know indeed that there is a God, and that he is a Being infinitely perfect. Thus far our Faith directs us. But we have no distinct Ideas either of his Essence, or of any one of his infinite Perfections: because we have no Light whereby to see or know them. And therefore as our Knowledge of him is weak and obscure, so is our Love of him languid and unactive. But in Heaven, where the Blessed behold God *Face to Face*, where they see all his Perfections clearly and distinctly, and as they are in themselves, their Wills being under no Impediment either from any Defect of Knowledge, or Mixture of Imperfections in the Object, they love him from the very first Moment with the whole Capacity, Strength, and Power of their Souls.

2dly, In this Life we are continually conversant

conversant with sensible Objects, and the Heart is most lamentably divided between God and his Creatures. Husband and Wife, Children, Friends and Relations, external Goods, and temporal Concerns, are but too apt to challenge a large Share in our Affections; and we all find by sad Experience what powerful Attractives these sensible Objects are, and how forcibly they draw us towards the Earth, so that the Love even of the *Just* in this Life is commonly so imperfect, that tho' God reigns *sovereignly*, he reigns not *absolutely* in their Hearts: I mean, tho' his Love be *predominant*, it is not without Check or Allay, but has many inferiour Partners with it.

But in Heaven, where the Saints are wholly absorpt in God; where, to speak properly, they see nothing but God, because they see him in every Thing, and every Thing in him; where, finally, all their Thoughts center in God, and are incessantly employ'd in the Contemplation of this charming Object; they also love God with a simple, pure, and undivided Love. Their Hearts is a Throne whereon God reigns as absolute Monarch, and Part of their Souls is so fill'd with him, that there is no Room for any Thing else; or if they love his Creatures, it is purely in him,

him, and for his Sake. So that all the Love they have either for themselves or others, is ultimately terminated in God. And, in a word, God is all in all Things to them.

3dly, As our Attention in this World is often diverted from God by the Cares and Amusements of human Life, so is the Love even of the Just but too frequently interrupted. It is ununiform, unfix'd, inconstant, and like an intermitting Fever divided between cold and hot Fits. But in Heaven, where the Saints have the Eyes of their Souls immoveably turn'd towards their beloved Object, and nothing interposes to take God out of their Sight, their Love is uniform, constant, and uninterrupted. 'Tis one eternal Act, or rather one eternal Extasy and Rapture. 'Tis a Fire (as St. *Austin* calls it) that always burns, because the Fuel, that nourishes it, is never consumed.

But the most material Difference, and Ground of all the rest, is, that altho' Man's Soul be created to enjoy God eternally, and has by Consequence an Inclination in her Nature to be united to him, yet in this World this Inclination is so smother'd under the Weight of Flesh and Blood, or weaken'd by the continual Opposition of the contrary Inclinations of the Body,
that

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that it is scarce able to exert itself, seems many times wholly extinct, and even when it is most active carries her but very slowly and feebly towards her last End.

But when she is now wholly disengaged from this Clog or Incumbrance, when this heavy Load of Flesh and Blood, which bore her down to the Earth, is now taken off, no Tongue can express with what Activity or rather Violence a Soul, perfectly purified from Sin, is carried towards God the only Object, Source, and Center of her Happiness. We may justly compare it to the impetuous Current of a rapid River, when the Banks that kept it in are broke down; or to the violent Motion of a Stone, that is carried down with its whole Weight to its Center, when the Obstacle that held it up is removed. For just so when the Soul is now deliver'd from the Clog of the Body, and broke loose from the Chains that held her captive, the Inclinations she has in her Nature to be united to God will carry her to this beloved Object with an Impetuosity not to be expressed in Words.

And who then can conceive the Extasies of Love and Joy, when she now finds herself in full Possession of the infinite Good for which she was created,
and

and to which her Nature carries her with such ardent Desires ! who can tell me with what Delight she plunges herself into that Ocean of Blifs, with what Avidity she drinks of that Torrent of Delights ! with what ardent Affections she throws herself into the Embraces of her heavenly Spouse ! Methinks I hear her congratulate with herself as she is represented in the Canticles of *Salomon*, *I have found whom my Soul loveth, I have laid hold of him, and I will not let him go.* I have found him who is the only Joy and Delight of my Heart ; my Spouse, my sovereign Good, my God and my All. I have found him, and nothing shall evermore separate me from him.

However, tho' it be impossible either to express or conceive the excessive Joy of a Soul now in secure Possession of eternal Blifs, I cannot end my Discourse without saying something of it. And all I can say is, that her Joy will be proportion'd to the infinite Greatness of the Good she possesses on the one hand, and the ardent Love she has for it on the other. *Their Joy (says St. Austin) will be according to the Measure of their Love : their Love will be according to the Measure of their Knowledge : and their Joy in thee, O Lord, will be equal both to their Knowledge and Love of thee.* So that as the blessed Souls will be wholly fill'd
with

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with God, so will they also be fill'd or rather overwhelm'd with excessive Joy, Delight, and Pleasure.

Hence the *Royal Prophet* says, that the Blessed in Heaven *shall be inebriated with the Plenty of the House of God.* Which figurative Expression represents most naturally the Superabundance of their Delight and Joy: For as the Virtue of Wine by Inebriation makes the Heart light, and forget past Sorrows; so will the large Draught of heavenly Delight cause a certain divine Inebriation or Drunkenness in the blessed Souls, the happy Effects whereof will be eternal Transports of Joy, and utter Forgetfulness of all past Sufferings, Conflicts, Persecutions and Afflictions: The delicious Wine presented to them by their heavenly Bridegroom will utterly drown all past Sorrows, and their undoubted Assurance of the Perpetuity of their State, and their being now for ever deliver'd from them, will perfectly complete their Joy. No more Troubles, no more Combats; no more Persecution; no more Hunger or Thirst, Heat or Cold, Poverty or Pain, Sickness or Death.

O blessed Joys! O happy State! To be for ever deliver'd from the very Fear of any Evil, and enjoy whatever the Heart can wish or desire! To see God clearly,

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to love him ardently, to praise him, and rejoice eternally in him! To possess what we shall never cease to love, and love what we shall never cease to possess! Oh! how truly may we say with the Royal Prophet, Blessed are they that dwell in thy House O Lord, they shall praise thee for ever and ever. They shall praise thee for ever, because they shall never cease to love thee, and they shall never cease to love thee, because they shall never cease to behold thy blessed Face.

But, O unhappy Mortals, who are yet confined to this Vale of Tears! Unhappy Mortals, who are banish'd from thy blessed Sight, and condemn'd to see thee with Fear and Trembling amidst a thousand Dangers in the darksome Labyrinths of this miserable World. However, permit us not at least, O God, to be so miserable as to fall in love with our Misery; permit us not to grow fond of our Exile, or sit down satisfy'd under our Chains. But since it is by thy Appointment we are banish'd for a Time from thy Presence, let us indeed submit to the Sentence, but at the same time let us be heartily sensible, that our greatest Misfortune in this Life is to be separated from thee, since otherwise we are in danger of losing thee for ever. And therefore, lest our present Banishment should unhappily

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pily terminate in an everlasting Separation hereafter, grant that, tho' we live on Earth, Heaven may always be the principal Object of all our Wishes, Hope, and Desires; that like true *Israelites* we may despise the insipid Pleasures of the sinful *Babylon* this World: And when our Inclinations invite, or even importune us to partake of the *Babylonish* Joys, grant that we may reject their Solicitations with a Christian Disdain, and answer them as the *Israelites* did: *How shall we sing or rejoice in a strange Land! If, I forget thee O Jerusalem, let my right Hand be forgot: Let my Tongue cleave to the Root of my Mouth, if Jerusalem be not my chief Joy.*

O heavenly *Jerusalem*, thou City of perfect Joy and Peace! Thou Dwelling-place of Saints and Angels! Thou Palace of the King of Glory! Be thou the only Object of our Love, the only Mark at which all our Hopes and Wishes may be level'd, the only indivisible Point where all our Hearts Desires may center. Let this World become despicable to us: Let us count all Things in it as Dung to purchase thee; that when the Term of our Exile is expired, we may be worthy to be received into thy sacred Mansions, there to see and love and praise God for all Eternity.

The End of the FIRST VOLUME.





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